Side by Side Cymru

Mind Cymru

Final report

July 2020

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Project details and acknowledgements

Title	Side by Side Cymru programme
Client	Mind Cymru
Project number	18095
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MRS Evidence Matters™
Company Partner

Glossary of key terms

▪ **Hubs**

The peer support Hubs offered both a physical and virtual space working in association with a range of individuals (known as Peer Leaders) and community-based organisations.

▪ **Peer Leaders**

An individual with lived experiences of mental health problems who leads or facilitates peer support activities to help support others.

▪ **Community-based organisations**

Non-profit groups / organisations that provide support and services to the local community, who engage In the Side by Side programme.

▪ **Peer support recipients**

People who received peer support from Peer Leaders / community-based organisations involved in the programme.

▪ **Peer Support Toolkit**

A toolkit developed for individuals who are interested in mental health peer support provision, specifically those who are:

o Supporting and being supported through peer support

o Setting up and running peer support programmes

o Those involved in commissioning peer support programmes.

▪ **Chattabouts**

An informal focus group which are engaging, participatory and fun for those taking part and are usually held in everyday community settings where people are already present, such as mother's and toddlers groups, faith and church groups, youth clubs, older people's coffee mornings, etc.

▪ **Statutory service providers and commissioners**

These are services that are paid for and provided by the government e.g. through the Local Health Boards and local authorities. Commissioners are individuals who are working in statutory services who are responsible for how health and care services are planned, purchased and monitored.

EVALUATION KEY POINTS AT A GLANCE

Side by Side Cymru — Peer support in your community

The Side by Side Cymru programme aimed to improve the capacity of community-based organisations and individuals with lived experiences to lead impactful peer support activities, with the following key objectives:

- CAPACITY BUILDING TO DELIVER PEER SUPPORT ACROSS WALES
- IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR PEER SUPPORT RECIPIENTS
- UNDERSTAND THE USE & IMPROVE UPON THE PEER SUPPORT TOOLKIT
- STRENGTHEN LOCAL NETWORKS & IMPROVE THE EVIDENCE BASE IN WALES
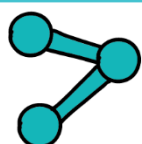
381 PEER LEADERS
were signed up to the Side by Side Cymru programme

287 community-based organisations attended at least one event

At least **3,800** people were supported by Peer Leaders who were part of the Side by Side Cymru programme

221 community-based organisations received a grant

£46,258 Value of grants awarded

108 EVENTS DELIVERED

6 in 10 reported a **positive** change in their **understanding** of peer support (58%)

9 in 10 reported an **increase** in **confidence** which was directly attributed to the programme (95%)

6 in 10 said the **quality** of peer support they delivered has **increased** (59%)

5 in 10 said the opportunity to **network** was the **best part** of the events (54%)

5 in 10 said the programme has helped **improve** their **knowledge** which will help them in the **future** (48%)

KEY FINDINGS

✓ The programme showed that a Peer Support hub model is effective in providing support to community-based organisations and Peer Leaders.

✓ The evaluation found evidence that there is a real need to have ongoing programmes like Side by Side Cymru across Wales.

✓ The degree of impact the programme had on Peer Leaders' and community-based organisations was dependent on their length of involvement with peer support delivery prior to their participation.

✓ Peer Leaders confidence in delivering peer support, their understanding of peer support and the value that it provides increased as a result of the programme.

✓ Statutory service providers and commissioners have improved understanding of peer support provision as a result of this evaluation and the programme's activities.

✓ Grants awarded through the programme helped sustain peer support activity by allowing groups to pay for venue hire, one-off events and materials.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Future programmes should commit to co-production to ensure that people with lived experience of mental health problems shape and lead the programme from the beginning. Sufficient time for co-production should be built in during the design and implementation phase.

Training elements in future programmes should consider delivering shorter, specific sessions on individual topics from the Peer Support Toolkit, so that attendees are able to digest content more easily and attend only what is most relevant for their group.

Future programmes should recognise that newly formed peer support groups and older more established ones may need different levels of advice and support, and a bespoke approach to networking and training may be required. This could include making the Peer Support Toolkit available to download and print in 'bite size' chunks or as individual chapters.

Establishing regional Side by Side Cymru Steering Groups in the areas the hubs operate from could bring together local stakeholders who are committed to peer support in their communities, creating some 'scaffolding' for those connections to be sustained beyond the lifetime of the programme itself.

Future programmes that involve engagement with statutory services and commissioners should consider the skills, time and resource these relationships take to build.

To increase engagement and support from commissioners and statutory bodies, more work needs to be done to demonstrate social return on investment.

Within the available resource and programme structure it was challenging to design a methodology that could effectively evaluate both the impact of the programme on peer leaders, and the knock-on impact this had on outcomes for peer support recipients. To better understand outcomes peer support for recipients in a programme structured like this, place-based qualitative methodologies could be considered earlier on, and sufficient resource made available for this

m·e·l research

About the Side by Side Cymru programme

Background of Side by Side

Mind's ambition is for everyone in England and Wales with a mental health problem to have access to peer support. In their 2016-21 strategy, they have committed to increase the availability of high-quality peer support for and to deliver it to around 56,870 people by 2021.

To help Mind achieve this aim, Mind Cymru secured a Welsh Government Section 64 grant to work with four Local Minds in Wales to set up and run a Peer Support Hub in their regional areas. This was known as the Side by Side Cymru programme. The programme ran alongside two similar projects (see Figure 1). Mind Side By Side which is funded by two corporate partners, Morrisons and Garfield Weston, as well as the Haramead Trust, and the Women's Side by Side programme, funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, as well as the Welsh Government.

Figure 1: Overview of the Side by Side programmes
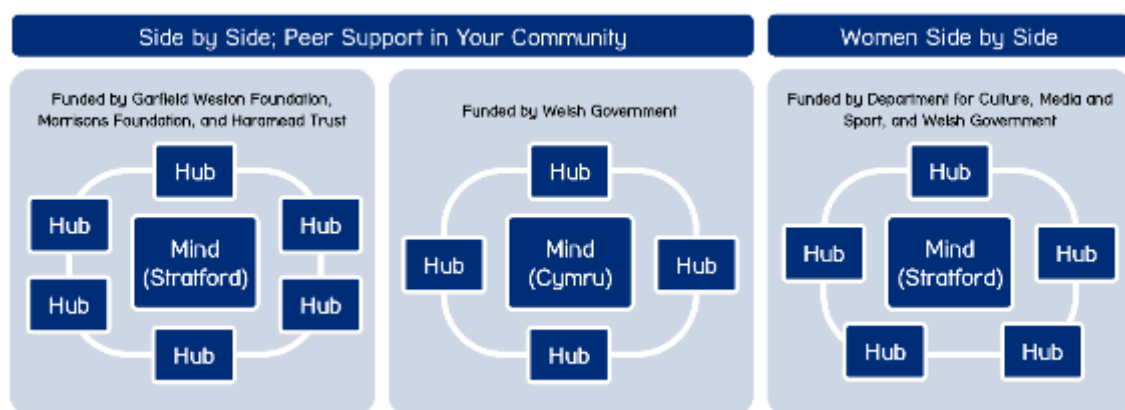
What is Peer Support?

Peer support is understood in many different ways because it is created and owned by the people who take part. At its core, peer support is about the relationships that people build as they share their own experiences to help and support each other. Peer support can develop in any setting, as a structured activity, or far more informally.

Previous research

Mind has already done extensive work through the Side by Side programme. Previous research (St George's, University of London and McPin Foundation (2017) Evaluating the Side by Side Peer Support Programme[1]) identified a set of common values that underpin community-based peer support for mental health. This work led to the formation of the Peer Support Toolkit (the Toolkit can be found here).

Peer support core values:

1. **Experience in common** – Peers share similar backgrounds, experiences, interests or goals.
2. **Safety** – Peer Support has structures in place to create physical and emotional safety
3. **Choice and control** – Peers have choice and control in how they are involved in their peer support.
4. **Two-way interactions** – Peers have the opportunities to give and receive support.
5. **Human connections** – Peers develop meaningful connections with each other.
6. **Freedom to be oneself** – Peers feel able to express themselves and be themselves.

The core values are connected with each other. Figure 2 shows the foundation of the values are experience in common, safety and choice and control. These values need to be present for individuals to have two-way interactions and human connections. Once all these things are in place, individuals begin to feel comfortable enough to express themselves openly, which is described by the value at the top of the pyramid – freedom to be oneself.

Figure 2: Core values pyramid

[1] https://mcpin.org/wp-content/uploads/side-by-side-final-impact-evaluation-report.pdf
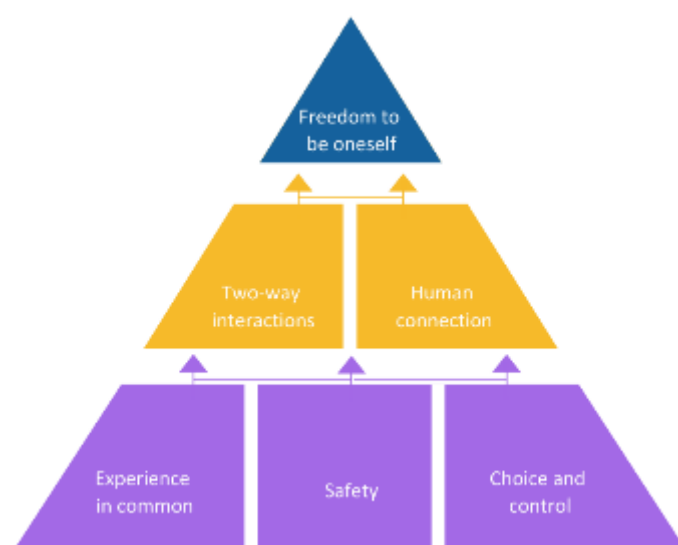
The Peer Support Toolkit was developed for people interested in mental health peer support happening in the community such as those:

- supporting or being supported through peer support
- setting up and running a per support group
- those involved in commissioning peer support.

There is now a need to better understand how Mind Cymru can help improve the capacity of community-based organisations and individuals with lived experience to lead impactful peer support activities, specifically in Wales. There is also a need to understand how the values from the toolkit are being incorporated into the peer support models and how easy or difficult it is to apply.

Programme purpose

The aim of the Side by Side Cymru programme was to **improve the capacity of community-based organisations** and **individuals with lived experience to lead impactful peer support activities**, with the following key objectives:

- **Capacity building** – to increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals who are running peer support groups, and to increase the resources those groups have (through grant provision) to ensure sustainable provision of high quality and effective peer support across Wales

- **Impact on Peer support recipients** – to increase peer support reach (to new and different audiences) and to improve wellbeing, hope for the future and connection to others for group members

- **To understand use of (and feedback on) peer support toolkit** – usefulness of toolkit activities and incorporation of core values

- **To increase stakeholder relationships and improve evidence base in Wales** – that commissioners and service providers have increased knowledge of the impact of peer support

Programme delivery

Funding received from Welsh Government supported four local Mind Hubs in improving the availability and quality of peer support in their local communities. The local Mind Hubs worked in the following areas:

- Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire and Llanelli – delivered by Mind Aberystwyth
- Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend – delivered by Mind Cwm Taf Morgannwg
- North and Mid Powys – delivered by Mind Mid and North Powys

- Newport and Monmouthshire – delivered by [Newport Mind](#)

Role of the Hubs

The peer support Hubs offered both a physical and virtual space working in association with a range of individuals (known as Peer Leaders) and community-based organisations. The Hub's role was to support Peer Leaders and community-based organisations (referred to as beneficiaries in this report) in delivering effective peer support. These beneficiaries would also benefit from Mind's wider peer support learning programme, coming together to share skills, resources and experience and offer mutual support and collaboration. Hubs were expected to build and strengthen their local peer support community in the following ways:

- host networking, training, and shared learning events for peer leaders, community-based organisations and wider health and social care providers and commissioners
  - **Networking events** were delivered to provide the opportunity for individuals involved in peer support, groups and organisations to meet each other and share their knowledge and experiences around peer support.
  - **Training events** focused on the Peer Support Toolkit and included support and mentoring which were delivered in a group or one to one setting.
  - **Shared learning events** were delivered to showcase learning across the Hub networks and included a range of stakeholders from service users to commissioners and other statuary service providers.
- provide grant funding to community-based organisations
- target specific subgroups of population, such as, men, those living in rural areas and Welsh speakers.

Programme timelines

The programme and evaluation activities were split into three distinct stages. A summary of activities is listed under each stage (Table 1). Please note that where the * symbol is noted, this indicates activities were not completed or impacted on due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Table 1: Programme and evaluation timeline

Programme stage	Evaluation activities	Timeframes
Stage 1 programme design ▪ Set up programme delivery – event scheduling, training session development, grant process development.	▪ Evidence review ▪ 2 x co-production workshops ▪ Evaluation plan and Theory of Change development ▪ Evaluation data collection design	October 2018 to February 2019
Stage 2 programme delivery ▪ Delivery of training & networking events and 1:1 support to CBOs ▪ Distribution of grants ▪ Promotion of programme and advertising of grants ▪ Learning event (October 2019)	▪ Baseline data collection (March 2019 to January 2020) ▪ Follow up data collection (August 2019 to March 2020) ▪ Interim evaluation report (June 2019) ▪ Midpoint qualitative telephone interviews (September 2019) ▪ Online Peer Support Recipient survey and journey diaries (March 2019 to January 2020) ▪ In depth telephone interviews with Hubs (March 2020)* ▪ Qualitative chattabout sessions (January - February 2020)* ▪ Hub quarterly returns (5 data collection periods)	March 2019 to March 2020
Stage 3: Shared learning ▪ Regional and national shared learning events*	▪ Data analysis and synthesis ▪ Customer Journey Maps (CJMs) / case studies ▪ Reporting	April 2020 to July 2020

Evaluation approach

Evaluation purpose

To support Mind in measuring the programme's success, M·E·L Research were commissioned to carry out an evaluation. The evaluation focused on the following:

1. *Hub capacity building:* to review the reach of the Hub activities, explore beneficiaries' experiences and perception of the Hub activities to identify any improvements to training and to understand changes in Peer Leaders' confidence to facilitate high quality peer support.

2. *Peer Support Toolkit:* to gather feedback on the Peer Support Toolkit, including whether additions / amends are required and to explore the different ways in which community-based organisations apply the toolkit.

3. *Individual outcomes:* to work with peer support groups, whose members have engaged with the Hub work, to monitor any changes in individual outcomes of peer support recipients.

Evaluation objectives and research questions

This evaluation included a formative element – to assess the development and implementation of the programme, allowing for learning and programme development; and a summative element – which focussed on the impact the programme has had on the beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The programme was measured against the following set of outcomes:

OUTCOME 1:   Peer support Hubs are enabled to deliver activities that will improve peer support capability in their local area

OUTCOME 2:   Peer Leaders self-report increased confidence to deliver peer support as a result of their participation in the programme.

OUTCOME 3:   People receiving peer support, which is facilitated by a Peer Leader who has participated in Hub activity, have improved wellbeing, hope for the future, connections to others and self-efficacy.

OUTCOME 4:   Organisations offering peer support who have received resources/equipment have improved the quality of their peer support.

OUTCOME 5:   The quality of the Peer Support Toolkit will be improved, and this will lead to more effective resources for Peer Leaders and so will increase their capability to deliver high quality peer support outside of the life time of the programme.

OUTCOME 6:   Service providers and commissioners will have more knowledge of the effectiveness of peer support and how it can complement other service provision.

OUTCOME 7:   The evidence base for effective peer support models in Wales will be improved.

To address the outcomes, a set of research questions were set for both the delivery and impact evaluation which are listed below. The associated outcome for each of the research questions is noted in brackets:

1. How has peer support improved in the local area? **(O1)**

2. How did the programme improve the confidence of Peer Leaders? **(O2)**

3. How did the programme improve the lives of the people receiving peer support? **(O3)**

4. How was the Peer Support Toolkit used and valued by organisations? **(O4)**

5. Has the Peer Support Toolkit improved peer support that has been delivered and if yes, how? **(O5)**

6. How sustainable are any improvements to peer support as a result of the programme? **(O5)**

7. To what degree have Peer Support activities been integrated into statutory services? **(O6)**

8. What are the positive or negative unintended outcomes of the programme? **(O7)**

Evaluation activities

To answer the research questions, the evaluation used a mixed methods approach (qualitative and quantitative research techniques), to engage with Hub project workers (delivery staff), Peer Leaders, community-based organisations (who attended events and / or received grant funding) and local people who are taking part in peer support activities (peer support recipients). Below presents an overview of the activities delivered. It should be noted that the delivery of some of the activities were limited due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

		Activity	Count	Return rate %
	Hubs	Collaborative design workshops with National Mind and Project Workers	2	-
		Quarterly monitoring forms (Project Workers)	20	100%
		Reflective in-depth telephone interviews with Project Workers (limited due to Covid-19)	2	-
	CBOs / Peer Leaders	Baseline surveys	263	46%
		Follow up surveys	84	32%
		Networking & training event feedback forms	545	60%
		Shared learning event feedback forms	92	-
		In-depth telephone interviews with Peer Leaders	19	-
	Peer support recipients	Online survey forms	34	-
		Chattabouts (limited due to Covid-19)	2	-
		Journey diaries	6	20%

Quantitative data

- **Peer Leader and community-based organisations**

The baseline survey data and event feedback forms were collected at the events (training and networking events) that beneficiaries attended and were administered by the Hub project workers via paper survey forms. The data was then sent to M·E·L Research for data entry. During the baseline data collection process, we asked all beneficiaries if they would be willing to take part in follow up research three months later. All follow-up surveys were administered by M·E·L Research and were mainly completed online with a few postal survey completions. It should be noted that not all beneficiaries completed a follow-up survey. Analysis was carried out to establish any change (Table 2).

Table 2: Return rate

Baseline survey	Follow up survey	Return rate
263	84	32%

Beneficiaries were also provided with an event feedback form on the day of the event, which included a short survey to complete at the beginning and then again at the end. This was to monitor immediate recall and changes in understanding as well as capture general feedback, for example what they liked best, what should be improved etc. Overall, 545 networking and training event feedback forms were returned. This number is greater than the total number of beneficiaries who were engaged with the programme as beneficiaries could attend more than one event. Alongside this, 92 Shared learning event feedback forms were received.

- **Peer support recipients**

An online survey was administered to collect data from individuals who had received peer support from Peer Leaders who had taken part in the programme. The online survey was promoted by the Hubs, Peer Leaders and community-based organisation via social media channels. In addition, posters with a QR code / hyperlink were provided to improve responses rates.

Qualitative data

The semi-structured interviews and chattabouts were carried out to unpick some of the interim quantitative findings. Overall, 19 in-depth interviews were carried out with Peer Leaders, 2 chattabout

sessions were held with groups and peer support recipients and 2 reflective in-depth interviews were carried out with Project Workers.

To capture more detailed information over a period, Peer Leaders asked some peer support recipients to complete a journey diary. Overall, 30 diaries were sent out and 6 were returned (20% return rate). The diaries focussed on collecting a consistent set of data of a period of weeks. Respondents were able to complete as many entries as they wished and were provided with a Freepost return envelope. The questions focused on:

- Get an understanding of what respondents wanted to gain from attending the peer support activities e.g. what was their goal. Each week they had to rate how close they felt to achieving this goal.

- Every two weeks they were asked SWEMWBS which is a short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The metric scores were calculated and used to assess any initial significant variations in wellbeing.

- We also explored what they liked best about the session they attended that week and what needed to be improved on.

Analysis and reporting

Caution should be taken when interpreting some of the findings based on smaller sample sizes; these should be viewed as indicative only and are mentioned in the text where relevant.

Within the main body of the report, where percentages do not sum to 100%, this is due to computer rounding. Where figures do not appear in a chart or graph, these are 3% or less. The 'n' figure referred to in each chart is the total number of beneficiaries responding to the question with a valid response.

All qualitative interviews and groups were recorded digitally, with key themes and findings extracted and entered into a transcript analysis template for further exploration. The pattern of response was further examined through content analysis in which the qualitative evidence from the interviews and chattabouts were systematically categorised to highlight key themes.

 This symbol indicates a process learning outcome relating to programme or evaluation delivery.

Programme reach

Table 3 presents the number of Peer Leaders signed up to the Side by Side Cymru network, community-based organisations who attended at least one event and peer support recipients who were engaged in the programme via Peer Leaders.

The targets set for the programme have also been presented where applicable with arrows indicating if the target was achieved or not. It should be noted that targets were set for each Hub based on the population of the areas the hubs were in e.g. the more rural areas had lower targets.

A target set for the programme was for 2,400 people to receive peer support facilitated by a Peer Leader who has participated in Hub network activities. This target was calculated based on an assumption that on average, each Peer Leader will support around 10 peer support recipients. Therefore, based on 240 Peer Leaders being coached through the programme, Mind expected the reach to be of around 2,400 recipients.

A note on calculating peer support recipients engaged through the programme

- The quality of data received from Peer Leaders / groups on how many people they supported ranged from estimates of between 3,490 and 8,071. As such the data had a skewed distribution that included a number of outliers or extreme values, which had a substantial impact on the mean (the arithmetic average). As such, we have instead used the mode (most frequent value in the data) and median (mid-point of the data) values to ascertain a more appropriate 'average' and to reduce the impact of the skewed distribution.

- Overall and across all four hubs the **targets** were **achieved** across all indicators.

Table 3: Number of Peer Leaders signed up to the network, CBOs who attended at least one event and number of people accessing peer support facilitated by peer leader

		Programme overall		Aberystwyth		Cwm Taf Morgannwg		Mid and North Powys		Newport	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
	Peer Leaders signed up to the network	240	381↑	60	95↑	63	93↑	54	117↑	63	76↑
	Community-based organisations which have attended at least one event	-	300	-	82	-	87	-	77	-	54
	Peer support recipients engaged through the programme	2,400	3,800-5,715↑	600	1,900↑	630	1,116↑	540	1,170-1,404↑	630	760-1,026↑

Table 4 presents the number of enquiries and number of grant funding awarded, alongside the monetary value by each hub and the programme. The targets set for the programme have also been presented were applicable with arrows indicating if the target was achieved or not.

- With the exception of Newport, all Hubs **achieved** the **targets set**.

Table 4: Enquiries about the grant and grant funding awarded

		Programme overall		Aberystwyth		Cwm Taf Morgannwg		Mid and North Powys		Newport	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
£	Enquiries about the grants	-	444	-	200	-	80	-	115	-	49
	Grants awarded	200	214↑	50	73↑	50	52↑	50	70↑	50	19↓
	Value of grants awarded	£50,000	£46,258 ↓	£12,500	£14,112 ↑	£12,500	£12,910 ↑	£12,500	£14,775↑	£12,500	£4,461↓

Table 5 presents the number of events delivered by each hub and the programme as a whole. The targets set for the programme have also been presented where applicable with arrows indicating if the target was achieved or not.

- Five of the eight shared learning events were delivered with the remaining events being due in March 2020. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak these events* could not be delivered.

- With the exception of the above which was beyond the programmes control, overall, the **events delivery targets** were **achieved**.

Table 5: Events delivered

		Programme overall		Aberystwyth		Cwm Taf Morgannwg		Mid and North Powys		Newport	
		Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
	Networking events delivered	20	27⬆	5	12⬆	5	5⬆	5	5⬆	5	5⬆
	Training sessions delivered	20	35⬆	5	18⬆	5	6⬆	5	8⬆	5	3⬇
	One to one sessions delivered	-	41	-	10	-	2	-	4	-	25
	Shared learning events delivered	8	5*	2	2*	2	1*	2	1*	2	1*

Who took part

- Almost eight in ten (76%) of beneficiaries were women and just under a quarter (23%) were men.

- Just under a fifth (17%) could speak Welsh, of these, just over third (35%) said Welsh was their first language.

- The majority (98%) classified themselves from a non-BME background.
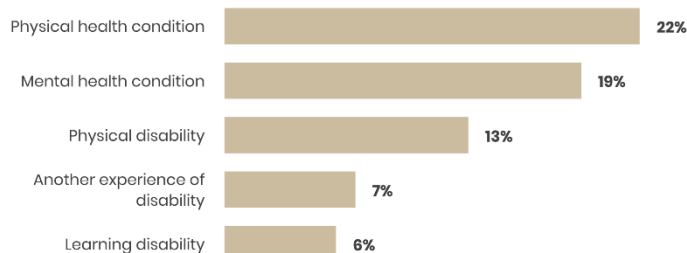
- Around two fifths (22%) said they had a physical health condition and 19% said they had a mental health condition.

Gender (n=525)

23%   76%

1% non-binary

35% said Welsh was their first language

Welsh speaker
Not a Welsh speaker
(n=517)

17%

83%

98% Non BME (n=521)

Long term health or physical condition (n=525)

Physical health condition	22%
Mental health condition	19%
Physical disability	13%
Another experience of disability	7%
Learning disability	6%
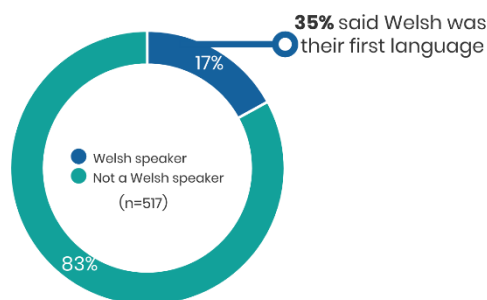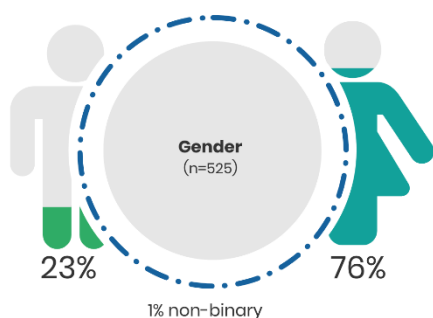
- Three quarters (75%) of beneficiaries who completed the survey responded as a community-based organisation or group who supports peer support activities. A third (33%) responded as a Peer Leader (someone who was involved in delivering peer support group/activities)

- The most common type (84%) of peer support activity delivered by beneficiaries who completed the survey were activity-based groups - meeting for coffee, crafts, gardening.

- Just under half (48%) of beneficiaries who completed the survey delivered peer support activities on a weekly basis, followed by 23% delivering monthly activities.

- The length of personal involvement in peer support delivery was fairly evenly spread with 38% being new to peer support (involved for 1 year or less), 33% having been involved between 1 to 5 years and 30% being involved for 5 years or more.

Long term health or physical condition
(n=275)

Physical health condition	47%
Mental health condition	41%
Physical disability	27%
Another experience of disability	15%
Learning disability	12%
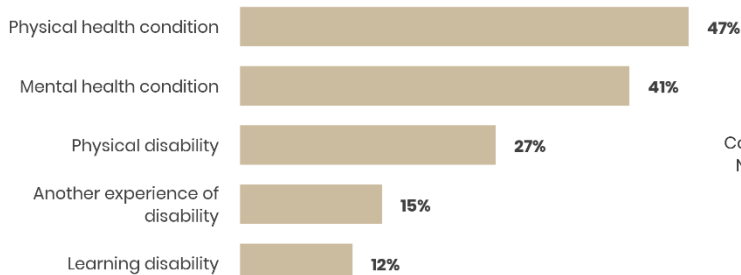
Type of participant
(n=259)

CBO	75%
Peer Leader	33%
Commissioner e.g. NHS, Local Health Board	1%
Other	4%

Types of peer support delivered
(n=262)

Activity based groups	84%
1 to 1 peer support	32%
Talking/self-help groups	26%
Other types of peer support	21%
Online peer support	11%
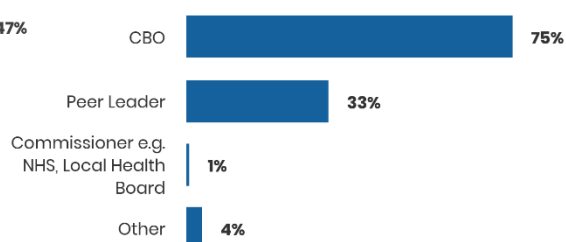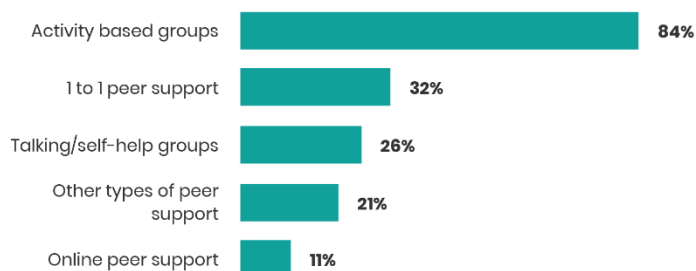
How often peer support is delivered
(n=261)

On a daily basis	7%
At least 2 to 3 times a week	12%
Once a week	48%
Once a fortnight	13%
On a monthly basis	23%

Length of involvement in peer support
(n=261)

- 38% New to peer support (1 year or less)
- 33% 1 to 5 years
- 30% >5 years
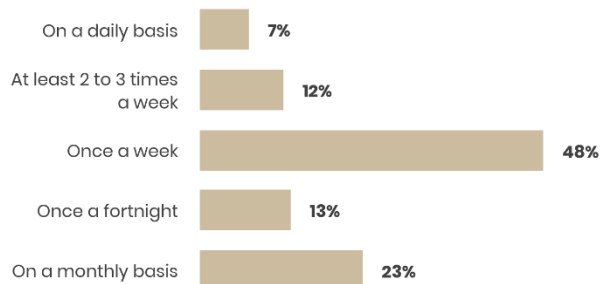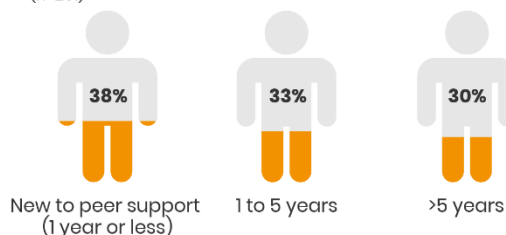
Target groups supported
(n=263)

Rural areas	67%
Men	60%
Welsh speakers	48%
Black & Asian Minority Ethnicities	46%
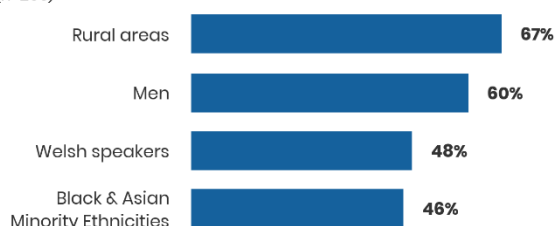
Map 1: Plotted postcodes of groups and Peer Leaders who took part in the programme
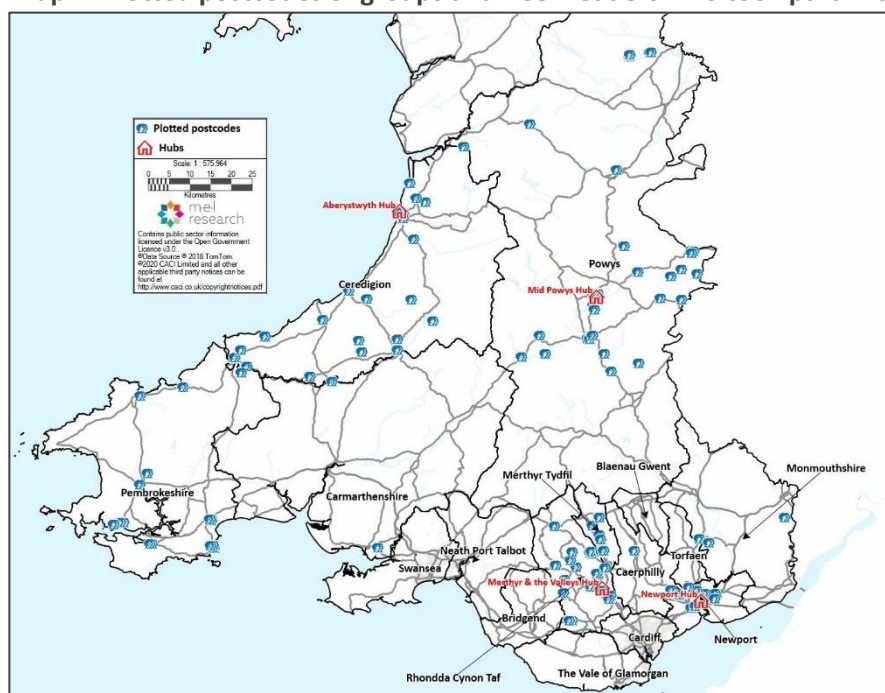
Impact findings

Capacity building

OUTCOME 1: Peer support Hubs will be enabled to deliver activities that will improve peer support capability in their local area.

Understanding of peer support

Peer support was generally well understood by those who were involved in supporting or providing activities in the community. Everyone described it differently, but the concept was the same. *"People with the same interest or the same disability or anything that they have got in common, so they are a peer group and to support them – this means they are there for them on a regular basis so that they know they have friendship and contact and that they can go somewhere that decreases their isolation."* Although there was a good degree of understanding of what peer support is, community-based organisations / Peer Leaders did benefit from being introduced or re-introduced the concept in a more structured format. *"Members of the group are better informed regarding peer support issues and procedures."* Some also commented on developing a deeper appreciation of why peer support is so importan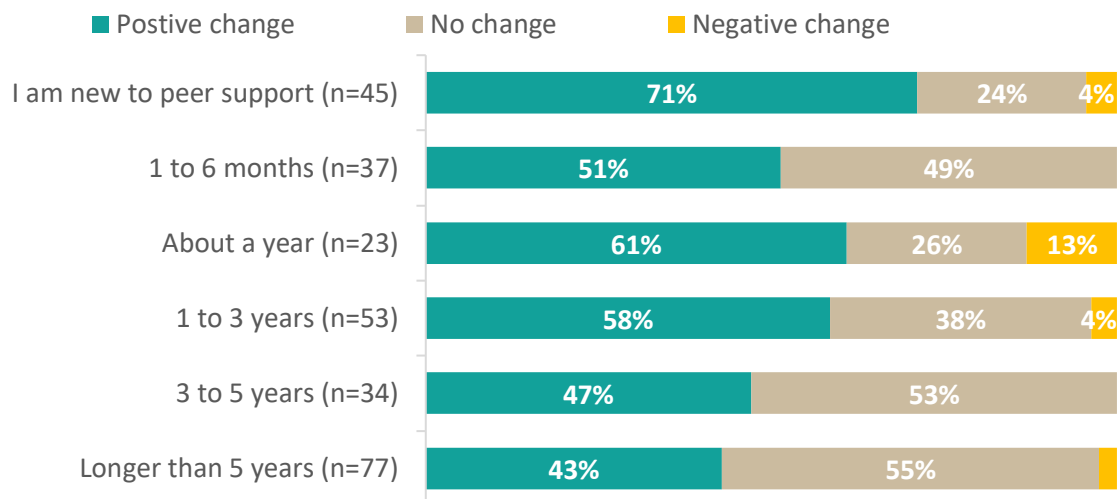t in the community. *"The session was very valuable for our volunteers as it validated the work that they were undertaking and helped them to feel more valued in the work that they are doing supporting others within the group."*

Almost six in ten (58%) programme beneficiaries reported a positive change in their understanding of peer support because of their involvement with the programme (Figure 1). Those who were newer to peer support reported greater increases, compared to those that had been involved for longer (Figure 2). Those who were less confident in their approach in delivering peers support at the beginning were also more likely to have reported a greater change in understanding (Figure 3). *"…to get the understanding that we are a small cog in a very big wheel was mind revealing really."*

Figure 1: Change in understanding of about peer support as a result of your involvement with the Side by Side Cymru programme (Base – 488)

Postive change	No change	Negative change
58%	40%	
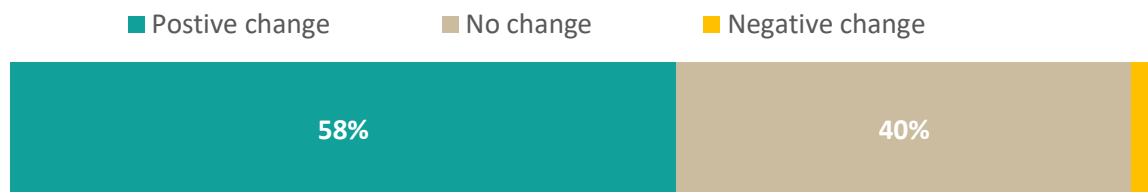
Figure 2: Change in understanding of peer support as a result of your involvement with the Side by Side Cymru programme by length of involvement in peer support delivery

Postive change | No change | Negative change

	Postive change	No change	Negative change
I am new to peer support (n=45)	71%	24%	4%
1 to 6 months (n=37)	51%	49%	
About a year (n=23)	61%	26%	13%
1 to 3 years (n=53)	58%	38%	4%
3 to 5 years (n=34)	47%	53%	
Longer than 5 years (n=77)	43%	55%	

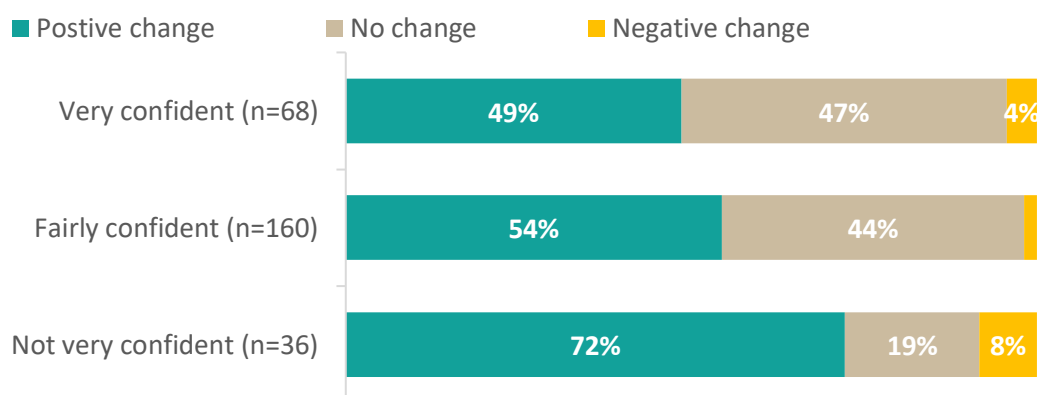**Figure 3: Change in understanding of about peer support as a result of your involvement with the Side by Side Cymru programme by level of confidence**

Postive change | No change | Negative change

	Postive change	No change	Negative change
Very confident (n=68)	49%	47%	4%
Fairly confident (n=160)	54%	44%	
Not very confident (n=36)	72%	19%	8%

OUTCOME 2: Peer Leaders self-report increased confidence to deliver peer support as a result of their participation in the programme.

Confidence

There were positive changes in the level of self-reported confidence, and the majority (95%) of beneficiaries attributed this directly to the programme (Figure 4). Caution should be taken due to the small sample size achieved. It was common for Peer Leaders to have reported that they now have more confidence to deal with difficult or sensitive situations and that they have more confidence in their general delivery as they know what they are doing is right. *"The programme just confirms that what we do naturally as a group in our weekly sessions is right."* Some Peer Leaders reported that their involvement with the programme has helped them think more about the structure of the activities / sessions delivered. *"…that in essence is what we do, we just haven't put this down formally anywhere."*

Peer Leaders mentioned that although the essence of peer support is delivered, in some cases there is no structure to it. Most seemed to acknowledge this and felt that they should be structuring their delivery *"My colleague and I were looking at each other with big eyes, thinking, oh we should be doing that etc."*

The programme impacted beneficiaries differently depending on the length of involvement they had with peer support. A greater increase in confidence is observed amongst those who were newer to peer support. *"This has given me more knowledge in running a support group."*

"I would say the sort of Peer Leader who found it really useful were new groups, somebody who had an idea for a group, had been thinking about it for some time, was tasked with taking the steps, and suddenly there is a chance for some funds and there's a workshop where they've been given a book, that has really increased confidence."

While those who were more established in delivering peer support, benefitted more from the reassurance of what they were doing was right, which in turn gave them increased confidence. *"Their confidence has improved, partial because they have told me. They said they feel they can put things in place and that because the information is from a reliable source they take is as good proactive. Word of mouth has worked really well as anecdotally people have been sharing ideas etc."*

Figure 4: To what extent has your involvement with the Side by Side Cymru programme improved your level of confidence in delivering peer support activities? Base - 20

Legend: Vast improvement ■ Moderate improvement ■ Slight improvement ■ No improvement

| 15% | 55% | 25% | 5% | **95%** |
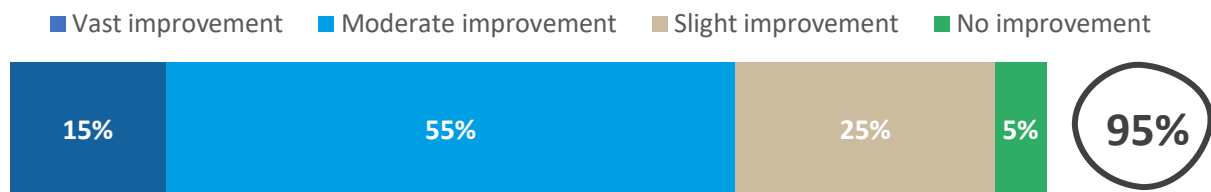
> The programme approach was well chosen and provided beneficiaries with a range of support in increasing confidence and understanding of peer support delivery. What beneficiaries took away and valued varied dependent on their experience. The enthusiasm received from beneficiaries indicates that the programme addressed a real need for such a network.

Quality and quantity of peer support provided

Beneficiaries reported a higher proportion of positive change in the quality of peer support provided following their involvement with the programme (Figure 5). *"It has made me more mindful of how people around me are feeling - they often act and look as if everything is okay, but that is not always the case."* This was more so for beneficiaries who were directly involved in delivering peer support such as facilitators, group leaders. The quantity of peer support provided was more likely to have stayed the same before the programme had started, although this potentially could be down to other factors that would have affected the evaluation such as the amount of time being able to 'grow' a group – which may not have aligned with the evaluation period.

Figure 5: As result of your involvement in the Side by Side Cymru programme, has the following increased, decreased or stayed the same?

Legend: ■ Increased ■ Decreased ■ Stayed the same ■ Don't know

	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same	Don't know
The quality of the peer support you / your group facilitate (n=82)	59%		32%	10%
The number of peer support groups or activities you / your group facilitate (n=82)	26%		61%	12%
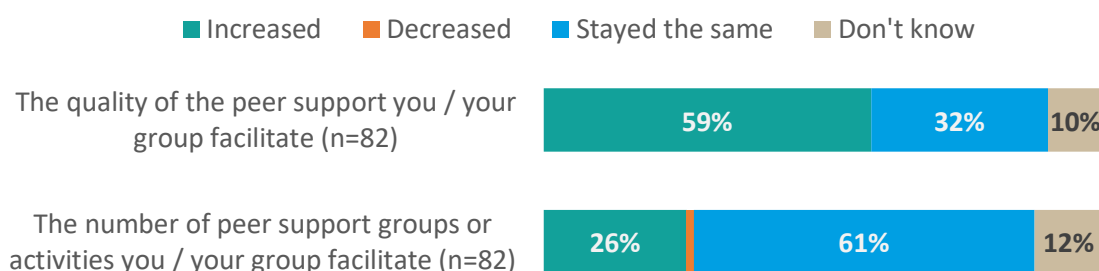
Events

Attendance at an event (training, networking, or shared learning event) was a prerequisite in receiving funding and positively, almost nine in ten (89%) beneficiaries said the event met their expectations (Figure 6). *"Training has helped me be more professional and evaluate other things, be aware of how others view things – it has given me perspective."* Those who were unsure or said no (11%) said this was because they didn't know what the event was about so didn't have any expectations to begin with.

Figure 6: Did the event meet your expectations? (Base – 498)

Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

Bar: 89% Yes, 10% Not sure
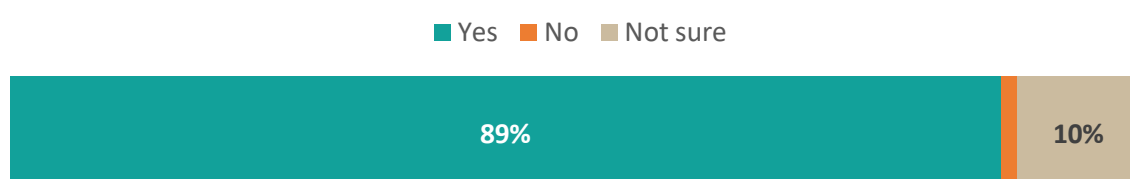
- **What beneficiaries valued**

Beneficiaries mostly valued the opportunity to network and interact with other groups etc (Figure 7). They liked being able to share ideas and connect with others who facilitated similar groups. *"Great to hear about groups in the community and the opportunity to speak with members."* Some felt that this gave them an opportunity they wouldn't normally have, as not knowing what is going on in the wider community can be isolating. *"Thinking about the experience, it has been a journey, because I'm freelance I don't get much support, it's not enough, I found this whole thing good for myself. I can give support to others."*

A few of the Peer Leaders / groups mentioned how they were referring and signposting others to groups in the community which has improved the support they can provide to others. *"To listen to others and their peer groups, others to have interest and take details of the group I'm running." "On the course, two of us went, we publicised ourselves during the introductions too, when there was a break we ended up talking to groups who were doing sort of similar things so yes, we did make a few contacts."*

Beneficiaries enjoyed the interactive nature of the sessions and would like to see more of this *"Not dry, but fun and interactive."*

Figure 7: What did you like best about the event (Base – 424)

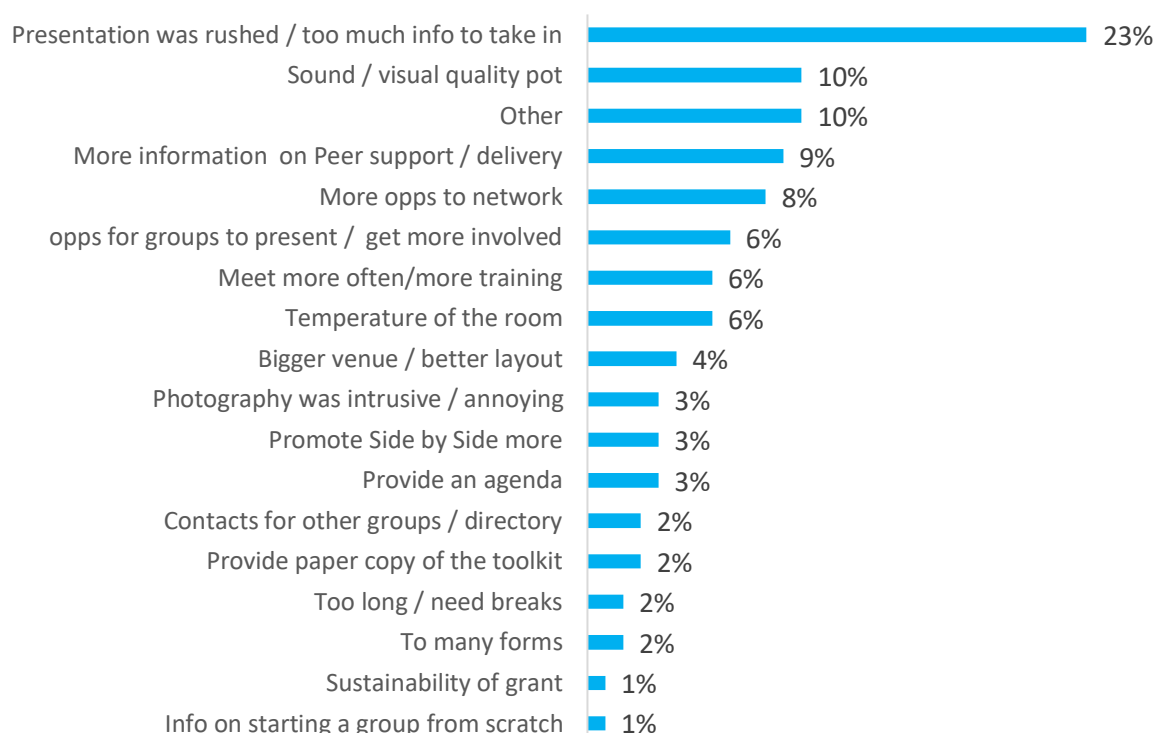|	
Talking to others / sharing experiences	54%
Generally interesting / liked the session	13%
Practical examples e.g. listening activity	11%
The presentation / speaker	8%
The importance of peer support	8%
The variety of information provided	7%
Friendly and welcoming session	7%
Being made aware of what it going on	4%
Other	3%
information on grants	3%
Peer support toolkit	3%
Showcased the impact of previous projects	1%
Session wasn't too long	1%

▪ **What could be improved**

Only a small proportion commented on what they thought could be improved during the events. Most commonly mentioned was that there was a lot of information and/or the event was rushed (Figure 8).

"Extend the 'course' to a full day in order to discuss topics more thoroughly … and give more time for information to sink in!"

"I think there was too much content to cover all the items on the agenda properly."

Figure 8: What do you think could be improved? (Base – 124)

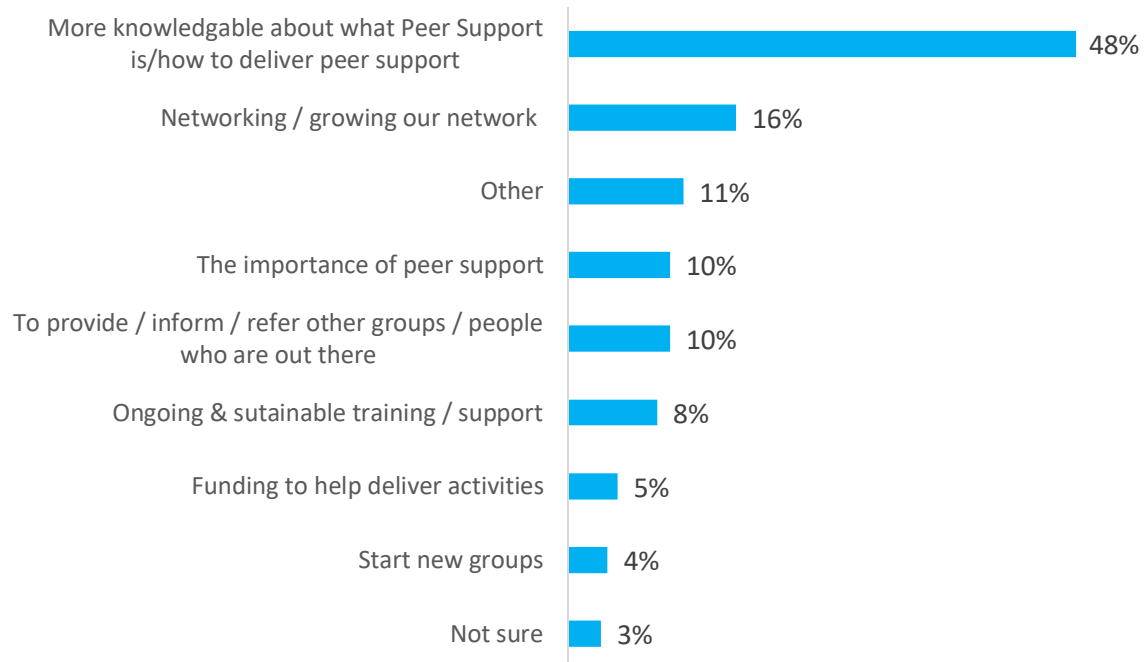| Category	Percentage
Presentation was rushed / too much info to take in	23%
Sound / visual quality pot	10%
Other	10%
More information on Peer support / delivery	9%
More opps to network	8%
opps for groups to present / get more involved	6%
Meet more often/more training	6%
Temperature of the room	6%
Bigger venue / better layout	4%
Photography was intrusive / annoying	3%
Promote Side by Side more	3%
Provide an agenda	3%
Contacts for other groups / directory	2%
Provide paper copy of the toolkit	2%
Too long / need breaks	2%
To many forms	2%
Sustainability of grant	1%
Info on starting a group from scratch	1%

Anecdotal evidence suggests that not everyone felt part of a 'network', with most only attending one or two events. There may be other factors associated to this such as, timing and location of the events for beneficiaries for example, but it was clear that this concept of belonging to a network was not a definite just because they had attended an event *"I don't consider myself to still be a part of a network as I only went to one event and as I haven't really done anything differently, I don't see this to have impacted on me personally or my group."*

- **How the networking, training and shared learning events added to the sustainability of peer support**

Programme beneficiaries felt that the events would help them in the future, having given them a better grasp of what peer support is and how to deliver it (Figure 9). *"To look at developing a group agreement from the start - discussions/workshops around this." "I feel more informed and can bring some of the information to the group, especially the group agreement."* The growth of the network was also highlighted by beneficiaries *"I met people from other groups, so there's potential for extra support and advice for my group. Possible financial support as well."*

Although not highlighted to a great degree in the quantitative data, feedback from beneficiaries suggested that more information on funding would help, specifically with sustaining group activities such as loss of venue etc.

Figure 9: How do you think the events will support you in the future? (Base – 324)

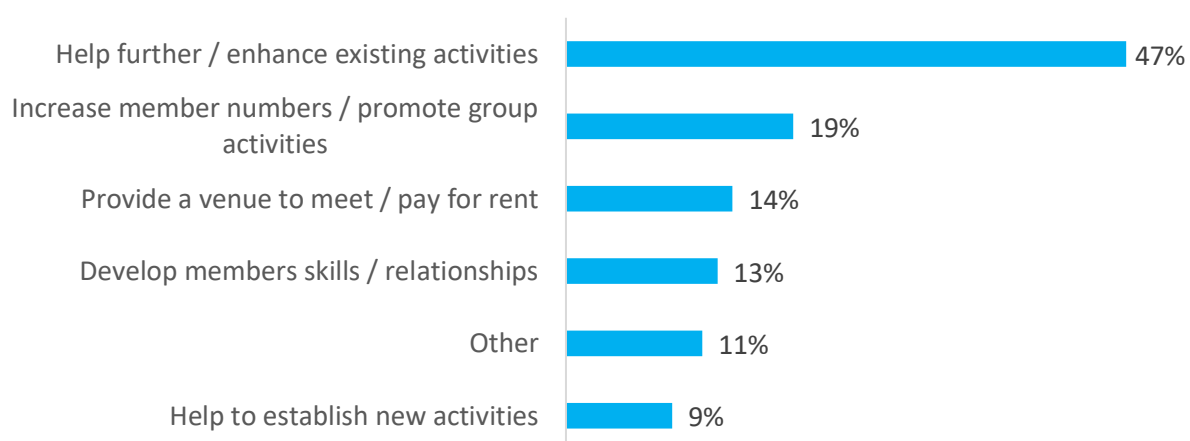| Category	Percentage
More knowledgable about what Peer Support is/how to deliver peer support	48%
Networking / growing our network	16%
Other	11%
The importance of peer support	10%
To provide / inform / refer other groups / people who are out there	10%
Ongoing & sutainable training / support	8%
Funding to help deliver activities	5%
Start new groups	4%
Not sure	3%

There is evidence of sustainability in providing increased levels of knowledge of a more structured form of peer support, alongside its value and networking activities that will outlast the programme.

OUTCOME 4: Organisations offering peer support who have received resources/equipment have improved the quality of their peer support.

Grants

218 groups received funding from the programme, with the funds most likely to have been used for art and craft materials and venue hire. We initially asked grant recipients how they thought the grant would benefit their peer support activities (Figure10). Groups felt the funds would help further and enhance their existing activities, *"To provide a safe soft area for the babies, be able to do more crafts and art activities. Help them interact with different activities and explore."* while also helping to increase membership numbers and promote their services. *"To promote the group, we need to print posters the grant would help us to do that. The grant would help us to pay for tutors or speakers to come and run activities. The grant would help us financially with the cost of refreshments. We can offer all group members a cup of tea!" (Figure 8)*

Figure 10: How <u>do you think</u> the grant is going to benefit your peer support activities? (Base - 79)

|	
Help further / enhance existing activities	47%
Increase member numbers / promote group activities	19%
Provide a venue to meet / pay for rent	14%
Develop members skills / relationships	13%
Other	11%
Help to establish new activities	9%

We followed up with grant recipients as to how the grant had actually helped improve their peer support delivery (Figure 11). Although the grant was small, it has helped to sustain group activities to varying degrees from keeping the doors open to offering new and alternative activities thus improving peer support delivery. *"Without it [the grant], we wouldn't have been able to make head way, I think we would have lost momentum on the church project if we hadn't picked up the grant and gone to that meeting."*

The grant has also had a knock-on effect, by help getting activities off the ground *"Without the funding from Side by Side Cymru we would have been unable to run the project."* And in turn generating further interest within the community *"Residents have been eager in coming forwards to offer their unused*

planters to the group and have acknowledged pleasure in seeing the effort made to improve the village."

Figure 11: How <u>did</u> the grant help improve your peer support activities in the longer term? (Base – 42)
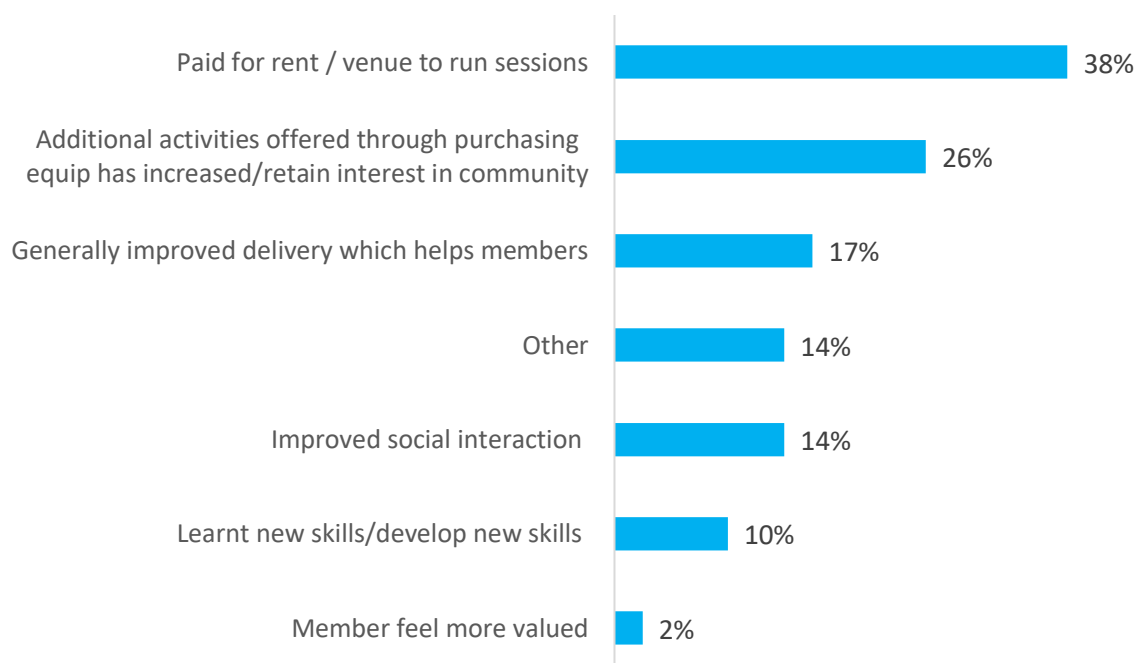
The grant has offered varying levels of short-term sustainability. The programme's grant funding has shown the need for supporting community-based organisations, more so for the smaller groups e.g. hiring venues and purchasing equipment.
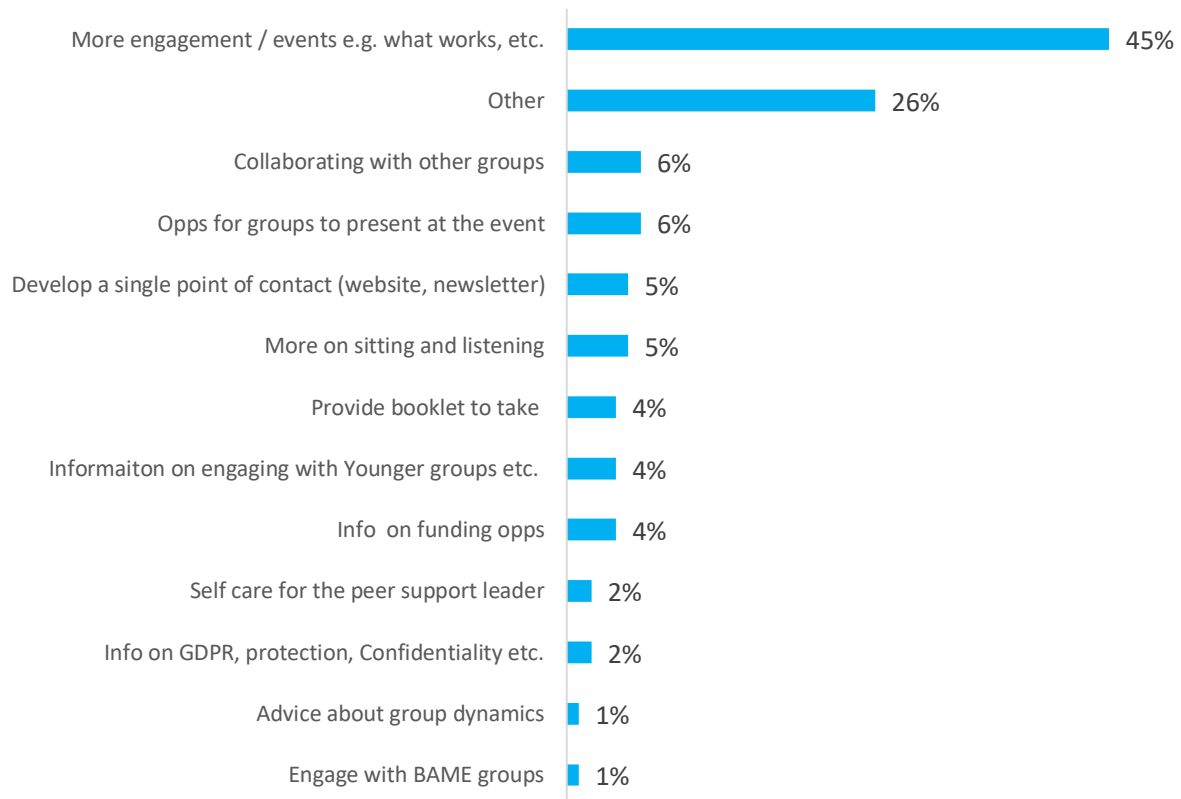
The funding has helped free up monetary resources to help groups improve the effectiveness of peer support delivered, for example, being able to offer more creative sessions, purchase refreshments etc. as rent has been paid for. Finally, as the funding helped newly formed groups start up, this will lead to an increase in peer support activities being offered in the community.

▪ **Improvements**

There is a desire for more peer support learning and networking opportunities. Of those that provided feedback, most mentioned was the need for more engagement and shared learning events (Figure 12). *"A further workshop to continue the discussion." "Maybe initiating group organisers to lead or facilitate their style of peer support so others can learn."* This again reaffirms the need for the programme.

Just over quarter (26%) of responses have been themed into the 'other' category. Suggestions such as 'transport issues in getting to events', 'parking needs to be considered at events', 'events should be delivered bilingually', and event delivery should 'consider those who are visually / hearing impaired'.

Figure 12: Suggestions for future events/workshops or shared learning sessions around peer support? (Base – 98)

Category	Percentage
More engagement / events e.g. what works, etc.	45%
Other	26%
Collaborating with other groups	6%
Opps for groups to present at the event	6%
Develop a single point of contact (website, newsletter)	5%
More on sitting and listening	5%
Provide booklet to take	4%
Informaiton on engaging with Younger groups etc.	4%
Info on funding opps	4%
Self care for the peer support leader	2%
Info on GDPR, protection, Confidentiality etc.	2%
Advice about group dynamics	1%
Engage with BAME groups	1%

Case studies

Case studies have been produced to showcase the individual impact the programme has had on Peer Leaders. Overleaf presents examples of two of the cases studies:

Julie hosts a **weekly** child and parent group in a **semi-rural** area of Wales. She initially joined the group **feeling isolated** as a **new parent** herself, and took over running it five months ago when there was no one else to.

> ❝ I was very isolated with my first child, I realised how important support like this is. ❞

During her involvement with Side by Side Cymru, Julie **increased** her **knowledge** of peer support and her **skills** to facilitate it by attending **three** of the **hub's networking** and **training events**. She was also able to apply for a **grant** to **sustain** the child and parent group.

Signposting to other services	Changing support	An increase in confidence	Improvements to the programme	Sustainability of the group
Julie found that going to the networking event was really interesting; mainly to meet others who deliver similar groups and how they can help each other.	Julie realised that she needed a separate space to chat to parents one to one. She also realised that the group needed to discuss the ground rules so that parents felt safer in the group environment.	Before Julie attended the events, she described herself as not that confident. She felt that she had to give everyone a solution. She knows the support she was giving was great, but the best thing she learnt was to just listen.	Julie thought the programme was great, but suggested a central directory of some sort where you can access support, other groups that you can connect with etc.	The grant helped Julie pay for the full hire costs of the venue as well as craft and sensory materials for the children.

"The networking group enabled me to access other support services that I wasn't aware of. Some of which helped a lady in my group."

"I think the group understand the rules but it has helped us clarify these, its helped a lot with confidentiality."

"I try to tell everyone it's all going to be okay, but the training has helped me understand that it is okay not to provide a solution, you can just be there for them."

"A directory of support that is kept up to date."

"The grant help with the longevity of the group."

m·e·l research

Carol took over the running of a local group **2 years ago**. The group offers activities to **carers** and **people** who have been **affected** by **strokes**. She wanted somewhere for people to go to that met the needs of people in her own position, including carers.

> " I am thankful that the Peer Support Network is there now. I now have somewhere to go to.
> I see it as a flagpole for information and support. "

Since her involvement with Side by Side Cymru, Carol now **feels** she has **somewhere to go** or **someone to contact** who can explain things if needed. Her **understanding** of what is required to run a group has also **increased**, alongside the **quality of support** she provides.

A wider understanding

Although Carol has been running the group for two years, she didn't realise how much work there was going to be.

"What I feel is that I just need the knowledge and need someone to explain to me what to do; for example opening a business bank account – I didn't know you needed a constitution to do this."

A need for more support

Since being part of the programme, Carol realised that she should have gone to someone like Mind for support earlier.

"To realise what your responsibilities are as a peer group leader, disclosure and confidentiality. You think that you can just pick up these things and run with it, but you need that back up."

A change in delivery

Carol has a better understanding about what is involved in running her group, this has given her more confidence. She has also set up a constitution so that she could open a bank account.

"My colleague and I were looking at each other with big eyes, thinking, oh we should be doing that."

Utilising the toolkit

Carol finds the toolkit a good reference guide and keeps a printed copy with her. The core values of the toolkit resonate with her group and she feels tolerance is something that needs to be considered when delivering peer support.

"That in essence is what we do, we just haven't put this down formally anywhere."

Sustainability of the group

Carol normally pays the rent by setting up raffles, selling items etc. The grant has taken off a lot of pressure by paying the rent for one year.

"We received a grant which will keep the group in existence for a year."

m·e·l research

Impact on peer support recipients

OUTCOME 3: **People receiving peer support, which is facilitated by a Peer Leader who has participated in Hub activity, have improved wellbeing, hope for the future, connections to others and self-efficacy.**

This has been the most challenging outcome to gather data for. Initially the evaluation aimed to collect data from peer support recipients via an online survey and journey diaries. Due to the low response rates (34 returned online surveys, 6 journey diaries), a decision was made to attend groups and speak to recipients directly – these are referred to as Chattabouts. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, we only managed to complete two Chattabouts with 20 recipients involved, therefore the peer support participant data has been further limited.

As a result, we have made use of journey diaries, comments gathered in the Chattabouts and anecdotal evidence to assess how much this outcome is achieved by the programme. The recipients who provided data had all attended peer support groups / activities which had been facilitated by a Peer Leader. The data presented under this outcome is limited due to the sample of beneficiaries engaged with and the unknown outliers affecting behaviours, feelings of beneficiaries.

Online survey with peer support recipients

This section presents results of the online survey as a count and percentage. Due to the small sample size received caution should be taken when interpreting the results.

- The majority of the survey received came from recipients participating in groups that were part of the Aberystwyth Hub network (Table 6).
- Around two fifths of recipients had been attending their groups for five years or longer and around two thirds took part in activity-based groups such as meeting for coffee, crafts, gardening (Table 7)
- At least nine in ten of recipients (Table 8) said that they (base 34):
  - ✓ 97% felt like were part of the group / session (32 count)
  - ✓ 97% felt physically safe (32 count)
  - ✓ 97% felt emotionally safe (32 count)
  - ✓ 94% felt they could come and go as they pleased (31 count)
  - ✓ 97% felt they could share their experiences (33 count)
  - ✓ 97% felt they could listen to other people's experiences (32 count)
  - ✓ 97% felt listened to (33 count)

- ✓ 97% felt respected (33 count)
- ✓ 88% did not feel judged (30 count)

Table 6: Peer Support recipients surveys returned by Hub

	Count	%
Aberystwyth	16	48%
Newport	9	27%
Mid and North Powys	6	18%
Merthyr and the Valleys	2	6%
Total	**33**	

Table 7: How long peer Support recipients have been attending their group

	Count	%
1 to 6 months	8	24%
About a year	5	15%
1 to 3 years	6	18%
3 to 5 years	2	6%
Longer than 5 years	12	36%
Total	**33**	

Table 8: Type of peer support taken part in (multiple choice question)

	Count	%
One to one peer support	2	6%
Online peer support	2	6%
Activity based groups	22	63%
Talking/self-help groups	9	26%
Total	**35**	

On a cumulative level we have not been able evidence any change in the level of improved wellbeing, hope for the future, connections to others and self-efficacy. There have been notable changes on an individual level shown through the journeys of recipients, although this cannot be directly attributed to the programme.

Case studies

Four case studies have been produced to show the individual impact of the programme on peer support recipients:

*It should be noted only Audrey's cases study presents the metric SWEMWBS data as she provided a complete data set.

A **knitting group** is run each **week** at a **local library**. Around **17 women** attend the group ranging from the ages of **55-90**. Everyone sits round a big table and conversations naturally take place. Some members have been attending for a few years and others a few months.

> " We're helping one another, by being welcoming, warm, friendly and we have an open environment. "

The group's **Peer Leader** attended **training** delivered by the **Side by Side programme**. The group also received a **grant** to purchase more **knitting materials**.

The benefit of peer support

Members have developed friendships through the group. Some of the older members don't have family, so the group offers a lifeline.

"I've made friends, I only knew one person but now we're asking, who is missing today and we check in on people if we haven't heard from them. Now I've got good friends here."

Grant support

Members said the main difference they have noticed since their Peer Leader went on the training was that they had more wool to use. Being able to make items gives them a sense of purpose.

"There is a sense of purpose helping another organisation, we give what we knit to charities and they can sell them on and generate income."

Impact on mental health

Although not a direct impact of the programme, having the materials provided a positive impact on members mental health.

"Knitting helps your mental health, the repetition takes your mind off things, the repetitive movement distresses you, not thinking of other things."

A change to peer support

The group's Peer Leader said that since attending the Side by Side training event, she is more aware of how to approach people, how to communicate, to be more patient and and to show empathy. Although, members hadn't noticed any major change.

"Can't say I have noticed a difference since Nancy did the training – it's a bit busier now and we have lots of wool!"

m·e·l research

Nancy runs a **play group** for children with additional needs and their parents. The group is run **once a month** and is a free, informal setting that offers families a place to come together and play.

> It's a non threatening group, no one is like ...what are you doing here, everyone is welcome.

The group's **Peer Leader** was new to peer support and attended **training** delivered by the **Side by Side programme**. The group also received a **grant** which helped pay for **venue hire**.

The benefit of peer support

The degree parents valued the group was clear, one parent said that she keeps coming to escape. Another parent said 'If you don't have a close supportive family, moms can go through troubling times.'

"This is parenting to the extreme, I was really struggling."

Impact on the group

The group didn't recall anything being done differently and one participant said that she likes the consistency of the group. Nancy said she hadn't used the Toolkit as they'd rather rely on local connections for support.

"As a small rural group we rely more on our links with other groups than Side by Side"

Further support

Nancy was only able to attend one training session as she had other commitments. She felt that having more input from health professionals would be beneficial to her group.

"Input from health professionals, therefore having more knowledge to offer to parents of children with additional needs."

Sustainability

Nancy said that the grant has enabled the group to continue running by paying for the venue. This has freed up money to reach out to new members in desperate need of this type of peer support.

"The grant will enable us to provide activities for more children. It provides a safe welcoming environment for parents and children with additional needs. "

Audrey attends a **weekly craft activity group** run in her local community centre. Audrey told us she decided to attend the group to improve her **self-confidence**, learn new **skills** and make new **friends**.

Audrey's mental well being gradually improved over a period of nine weeks.

● SWEMWBS Metric score

Week 1	Week 3	Week 5	Week 7	Week 9
21.5	18.6	26	28.1	32.6
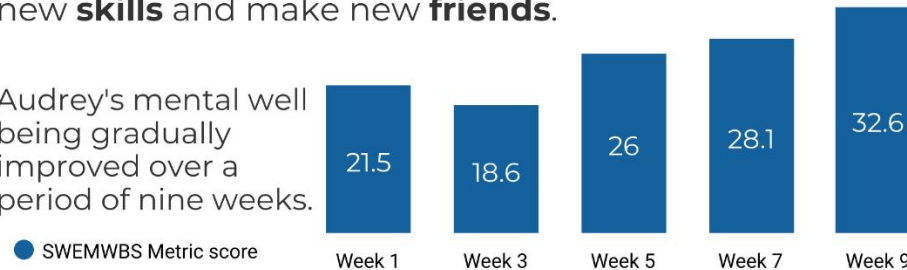
Week 1

Audrey enjoys connecting with others in the group and sharing her experiences. She felt more confident in her own abilities. Talking to others made her feel more valued and a part of something. She did feel that the group needed more craft materials.

Week 3

Audrey enjoyed the one to one discussion this week, as well as working on the sewing machine. She started to feel closer to others through sharing her experiences. She felt that friendships were developing.

Week 5

This week Audrey felt more open talking about her problems. She felt more relaxed, like she could be herself and offer help to others in the group.

"I felt more motivated after going to group."

Week 7

This week Audrey made craft materials that they would sell. She enjoyed working as a team, in a larger group setting. She did feel that there was less of a shared interest in the larger group though.

"My confidence is improving and I feel better about myself"

Week 9

This week Audrey felt really proud of the craft materials they had made and to show this all off to the public. Audrey was proud of her talent and felt really confident in herself.

"I am doing more things outside the home now."

Barbara attends a **fortnightly group** run in the Town Hall. They enjoy coffee, tea and biscuits while having an **informal chat**.

> *I originally went with my mother, she doesn't go anymore, but I get such a good feeling of wellbeing that I continue to go.*

Barbara gets a really **good feeling** from attending the group. It is a friendly, happy meeting place where she **feels included**.

Week 1

Barbara recalled her group facilitator using an activity from the toolkit called 'truth or lie'.

"We each related 3 experiences, one of which was untrue and the rest of the group had to guess the lie, it generated a lot of laughter and interactions. "

Week 3

Barbara felt the group discussion was a bit negative as the group facilitator tried to establish what other activities they would like to do, as a change from the usual.

"No one really had any ideas or engaged with it and it was a bit negative. "

Week 5

A round table discussion took place about how members used to get to school. Everyone joined in and contributed.

"It generated a lot of discussions and brought back memories, mostly happy ones. "

Week 7

Barbara initially didn't want to to the group today. She had been working on a home decorating project and became disheartened. Barbara went to the group and felt really motivated, she then went home and got on with her decorating.

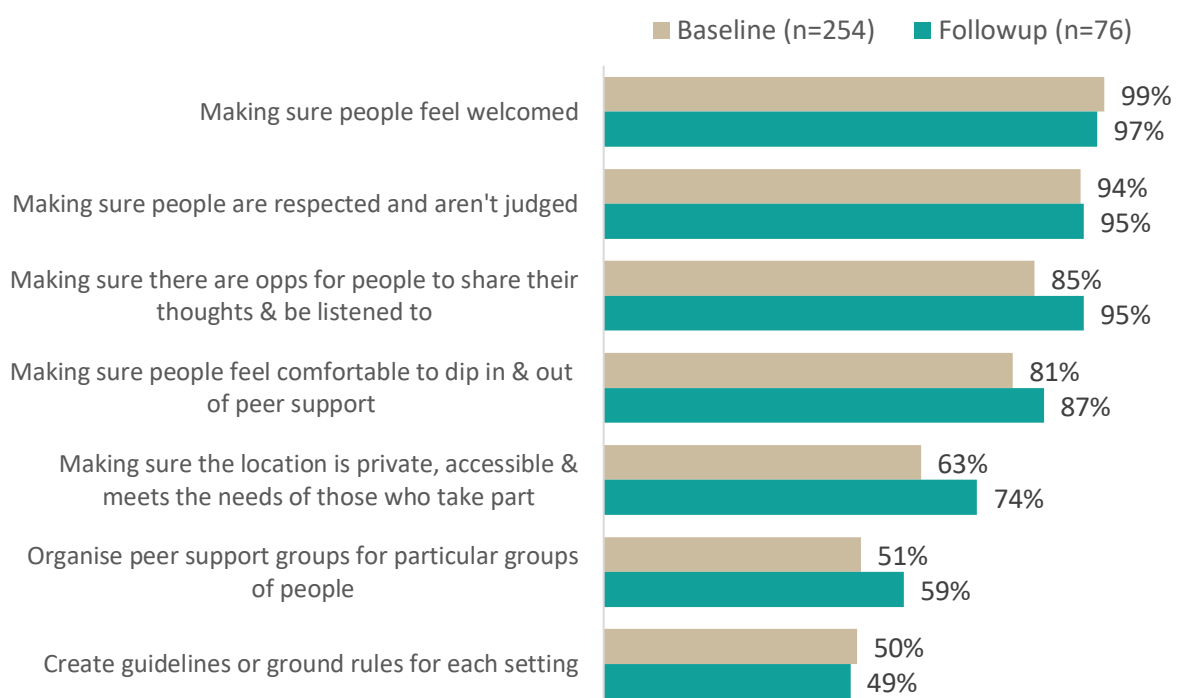" I felt much better for going."

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Peer support toolkit

OUTCOME 5: The quality of the Peer Support Toolkit will be improved, and this will lead to more effective resources for Peer Leaders and so will increase their capability to deliver high quality peer support outside of the life time of the programme.

- **How beneficiaries found the toolkit**

We found that some groups were less likely to have been setting ground rules prior to their involvement with the programme. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some beneficiaries felt that having these 'rules' were common sense and again taken on naturally without any formal group agreement with those receiving or delivering peer support. There has been no real change over time with groups formally developing these ground rules with members, but the sample size for the follow up is relatively small, so caution should be taken when interpreting the results. The qualitative work with Peer Leaders does suggest that this has been taken on by some. For example, discussing ground rules with the group more formally. *"The provision of peer support hasn't changed hugely, but I have found that the groups are now becoming more structured / delivering more structured sessions."* There have been some positive changes such as increases in groups making sure the location is private, accessible and meets the needs of people who attend and making sure there are opportunities for people to share thoughts and be listened to (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Do you or your group take any of the following steps when providing peer support?

Legend: Baseline (n=254), Followup (n=76)

Step	Baseline	Followup
Making sure people feel welcomed	99%	97%
Making sure people are respected and aren't judged	94%	95%
Making sure there are opps for people to share their thoughts & be listened to	85%	95%
Making sure people feel comfortable to dip in & out of peer support	81%	87%
Making sure the location is private, accessible & meets the needs of those who take part	63%	74%
Organise peer support groups for particular groups of people	51%	59%
Create guidelines or ground rules for each setting	50%	49%

Beneficiaries who provided feedback on the toolkit following a training session, said they found the toolkit easy to understand, helpful, practical to use and generally agreed with the core values. Suggestions on other values that were important to groups still fell within essence of the toolkit such as safety *"people feeling safe in my group is really important."* Confidentiality and being non-judgemental were also important aspects when delivering peer support.

- **The core values**

The core values of the toolkit were naturally already adopted in many instances by beneficiaries as these seemed to fit well with group dynamics. Beneficiaries who attended training on the Peer Support Toolkit were asked which core value from the toolkit they currently used. Most mentioned (91%) was 'human connection' - peers developing meaningful connections with each other. Least likely to have been mentioned (74%) was 'safety' - having structures in place to create a physical and emotional safety (Figure 14). Although when gathering feedback on the toolkit, safety was mentioned fairly frequently by beneficiaries.

Figure 14: Which of the following core values from the toolkit does your <u>current</u> peer support activities particularly focus on? (n=151)

During the baseline survey we asked what aspects of the toolkit beneficiaries intended to use (Figure 15). Most mentioned was the 'activities' section (64%), following by 'starting conversations' (60%) and then the core values (59%).

Figure 15: What elements of the peer support toolkit do you <u>intend</u> to use? (n=146)

Activities	64%
Starting conversations ideas	60%
Core values	59%
Organisational support advice	50%
How to overcome challenging situations	49%
Understanding your impact	47%
Key decisions advice	43%
Not sure at the moment	19%
None of it	3%

We followed this up with beneficiaries again, exploring to what extent aspects of the toolkit were being used (Figure 16). There was a shift with beneficiaries being more likely to have used the core values a 'great deal / moderate amount' (41%) when compared to other aspects of the toolkit. The qualitative work suggests that this was because the core values were more likely to have assisted in delivery and helped embed the values of the peer support already being delivered. *"The group felt it was important to concentrate on these values after the training, so we have re-visited them at each session."*

"The values stated in the toolkit align greatly with the values we wanted to create for the support group - having them in the toolkit gave us confidence that we were leading our group in the right way."

Figure 16: To what <u>extent</u> have you been using the below aspects from the Peer Support Toolkit in your own peer support group or activities?

Legend: ■ A great deal ■ A moderate amount ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never ■ Don't know

Used a great deal/ moderate amount

	A great deal	A moderate amount	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Don't know	Used a great deal/ moderate amount
The core values (n=82)	13%	28%	24%	9%	11%	15%	41%
Troubleshooting & dealing with challenges (n=82)		23%	22%	16%	22%	16%	24%
Activities (n=82)	10%		17%	21%	33%	16%	13%
Key decisions' section (n=82)	11%		37%	13%	21%	17%	12%

A small proportion who said they had not really used the core values were asked why. Not having an opportunity to use or reflect on the core values or that they were not suitable were most commonly mentioned *"The training wasn't very helpful for our work but was essential for funding."*

"No opportunity to use them yet."

▪ **Improvements to the toolkit**

Suggestions include focusing on having one to one training with the group on the toolkit, a list of open ended questions that Peer Leaders could ask, and to include a directory of groups in the areas that could provide further support. Mind currently have an online directory covering England, extending this to include a Welsh version would be beneficial.

Sessions focusing on specific topics were also highlighted by beneficiaries such as running training on setting up a group e.g. a how to guide, financial elements and safeguarding; on how to deal with challenging behaviour etc. *"People found this section really useful, especially groups who deal with sensitive topics. There were a handful of groups that contacted me about how to have those difficult conversation about behaviour. Now that they have the toolkit, they feel that are now capable of dealing with this. This helped give them the confidence to do it well."*

The values of the toolkit broadly align with how groups deliver peer support and have been highlighted to be integral to delivery. There is a need for more targeted training sessions on specific topics e.g. bite size delivery. A directory of support and local groups would also be beneficial, similar to one already established for England.

Stakeholder relationships and evidence base in Wales

OUTCOME 6: Service providers and commissioners will have more knowledge of the effectiveness of peer support and how it can complement other service provision.

A note on outcome 6: *We cannot fully document the overall programme impact for this outcome as influencing activities planned for year 3 have yet to be delivered. Alongside this, the Covid-19 outbreak have delayed year 3 activities. Regardless, this report provides some steer that will be useful to support year 3 activities.*

Beneficiaries reported better relationships with community groups and charities / third sector organisations compared to with commissioning bodies and local authorities (Figure 17) in the baseline survey.

When following up with beneficiaries a few months, with the exception of charities / third sector organisations, there was a decrease in the proportion stating that relationships were poor, but an increase in the number stating they weren't sure/don't know. Hubs fed back that it had been challenging in building relationships due to the time required to foster the relationships in a timebound programme.

There is interest from statutory services but there are more complex challenges – which are discussed further on in this section - that should be explored, more so with commissioners themselves.

Another explanation for the increases in beneficiaries stating they don't know could be down to the realisation that there is much more out there and to conceptualise this can be daunting.

Figure 17: How would you rate your relationships with the following groups…

Legend: ■ Very good ■ Fairly good ■ Fairly poor ■ Very poor ■ Don't know

Community groups in your local area

	Very good	Fairly good	Fairly poor	Very poor	Don't know
Baseline (n=238)	37%	41%	11%		8%
Follow up (n=84)	27%	42%	8%		20%
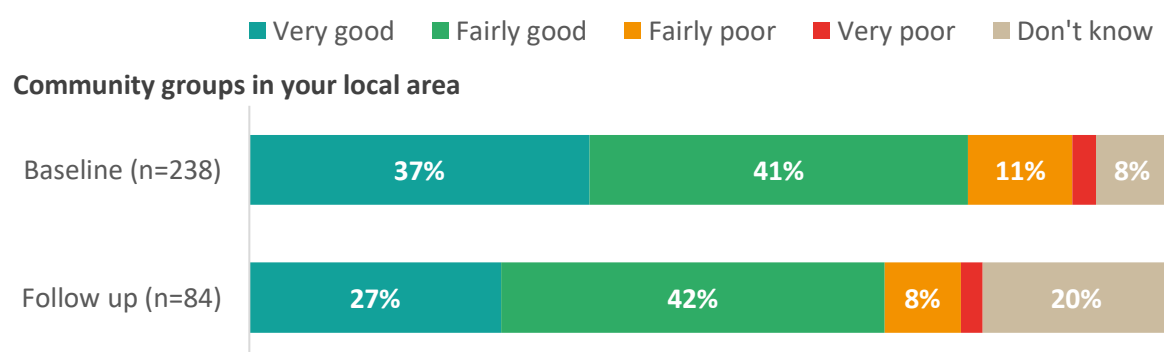
Commissioners e.g. NHS, Local Health Board

Baseline (n=199)	14%	31%	20%	15%	21%
Follow up (n=84)	8%	27%	11%	17%	37%

Local authority

Baseline (n=202)	17%	31%	20%	15%	17%
Follow up (n=84)	13%	32%	13%	14%	27%

Third sector groups / charities

Baseline (n=216)	37%	40%	6%	6%	10%
Follow up (n=84)	32%	42%	7%	6%	13%

A key element of the programme was to create more awareness of peer support with service providers and commissioners. When beneficiaries were asked how their involvement with the programme has helped them in the long term, just over third (35%) said building relationships with statutory service providers local authority, commissioners e.g. local health board (Figure 18). We know that for some groups, this is seen as an important aspect in improving and sustaining peer support *"We'd like to have a relationship with commissioners, that's something for we'd like to have for the group, we do want to run projects via the NHS and run short courses."* Although this was less so for smaller or well established grass root peer support groups. They seemed happier continuing with the status quo and did not want any involvement with statutory services.

Figure 18: Do you think your involvement with the Side by Side Cymru programme will help you in the longer term in any of the following ways?

Sharing what I have learnt with others	79%
Helping to reach more people with peer support	75%
Improving confidence in delivering peer support	68%
Improving knowledge about delivering good quality peer support	68%
Building relationships with other peer support groups in my local area	58%
Helping to establish new peer support groups and activities	43%
Building relationships with statutory service providers local authority, commissioners	35%

Challenges faced by statutory service providers

We explored the challenges faced by statutory service providers and commissioners in integrated peer support into national service delivery. Below presents the key themes taken from this group:

▪ **Funding**

Funding was most commonly mentioned by beneficiaries or statutory service providers themselves when exploring what the challenges were on supporting community-based peer support. *"Financing and public transport to locations." "Sometimes long-term funding can be a challenge, as well as getting the health and statutory section to share information about how peer support should be considered is challenging."*

▪ **Fostering good relationships and open communication**

Beneficiaries felt having a clear line of communication and creating trusting relationship was also challenging to statutory service providers. *"Cohesion and good community connections." "Open communication and trust."*

▪ **Time and capacity**

Statutory service providers felt having the time and capacity to engage with peer support services and take them on board was also a challenge. This could be down to a wider shift required in government approaches to mental health provision. *"Lack of time to set it up this engagement. Funding. Getting volunteers to take ownership of group. Getting peers in the first place. Spreading the word." "Staff time, lack of commitment / dedication."*

Opportunities in supporting community-based peer support

Statutory service providers felt that by supporting community-based peer support, it would help empower people at a local level to take this type of mental health provision further *"Building community resilience and empowering people to look to their community for support."* Improving connections between local groups and statutory services could also present positive opportunities *"Working on a local level with other Peer Leaders and encouraging them to get involved."* This in turn could help strengthen local communities to be more self-sufficient and reducing referrals to statutory services as people will know how and where to get help. *"Enhancing wellbeing, taking pressure off statutory services, community cohesion."*

The is a need to evidence the value of such peer support models, such as the Side by Side Cymru programme. Utilising a Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach can help account for and quantify the social benefits of a programme as well as the cost of delivering it. SROI is often reduced to a single number, yet it should really be about delivering more social good.

Statutory service providers were asked if they would consider supporting community-based peer support in any of the ways listed in Figure 19 as a result of attending an event organised by the programme. Most said they would be willing to network with groups and Peer Leaders and keep in touch with the Peer Support Hub / local Mind. Positively a quarter (25%) of providers said they already have developed peer support in their own organisation, although this action was less likely to have been taken on by providers if not already doing so.

Figure 19: As a result of attending the event today, would you consider supporting community-based peer support in any of the following ways?
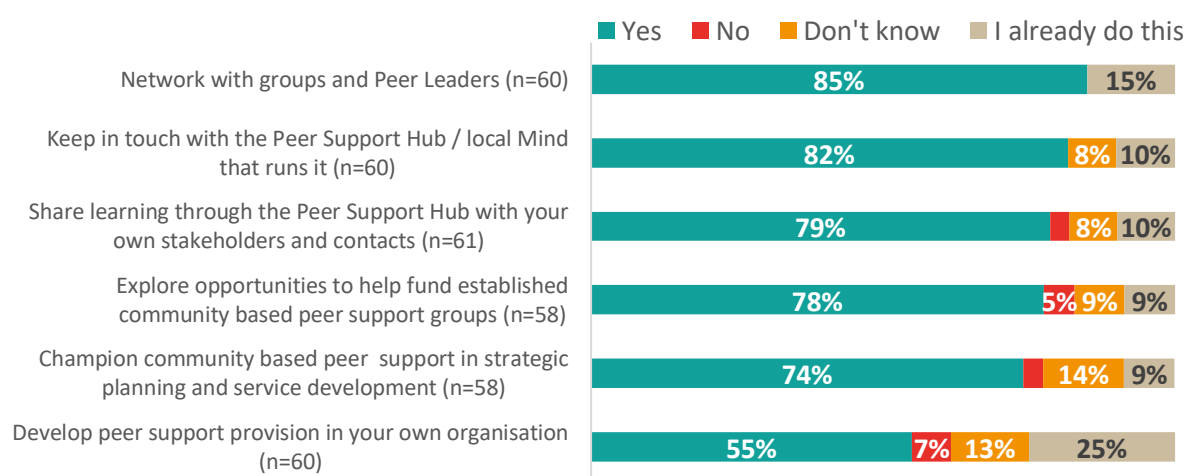
What would help commissioners in the future

▪ **Peer support commissioners guide**

Around three quarters (76%) of statutory service providers said that a guide for commissioners would be useful (Figure 20). Content should focus on the type of peer support available (e.g. one to one, online) examples of best practice, costing models and a value framework.

Figure 20: Do you think a 'Peer Support Guide for Commissioners' would be useful and what would you to see in the guide??
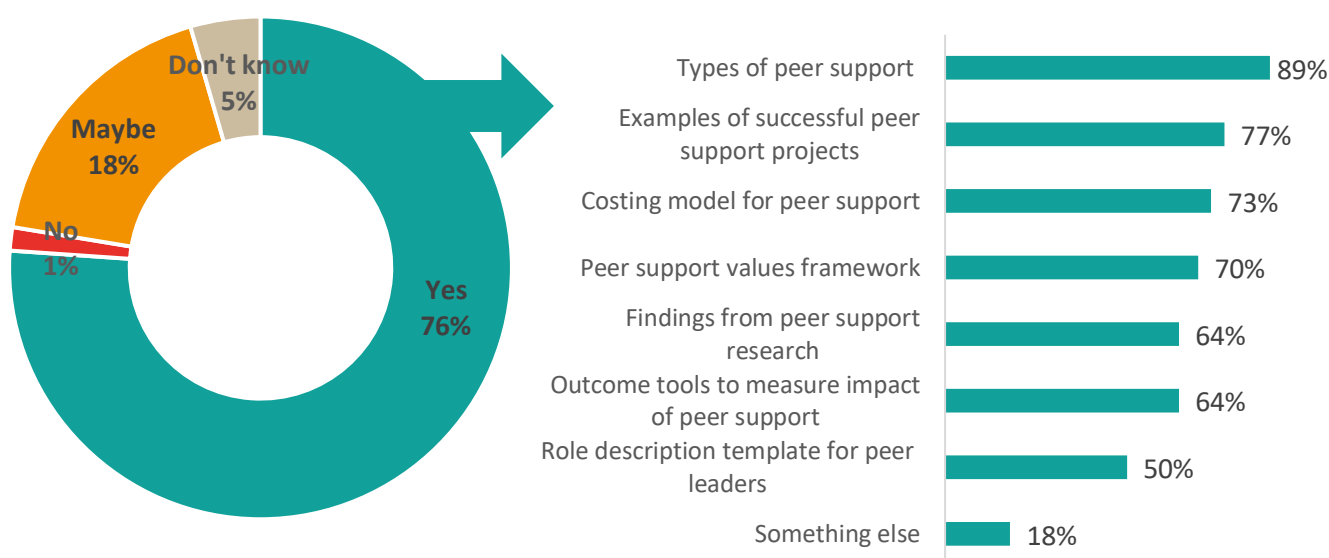
▪ **Local community asset map**

Statutory service providers would like to know what peer support services / groups are out there and therefore suggested a local network map. *"Directory of other community groups that offer peer support as signposting and for networking."*

"A good community map."

"A newsletter that lists all the peer support groups, their remit & contact details for the country: - a directory?"

▪ **Increasing networking / engagement opportunities**

A few commissioners and groups mentioned there should be more networking opportunities, specifically with more local grass root groups. *"Regular opportunities to bring commissioners face to face with projects that are small scale, community let etc."*

"Get out of the office and meet third sector orgs in their own places / areas."

Future programmes that involve engagement with statutory services and commissioners should consider the skills, time and resource these relationships take to build.

To increase engagement and support from commissioners and statutory bodies, more work needs to be done to demonstrate social return on investment.

Process learning

Delivery across the programme

What worked well

1. **Collaborative Working**

Mind believes that working collaboratively with partners plays an important role in the design and delivery of programmes. Whilst working together MEL, local Mind Hub teams and evaluation team were mindful to:

- Recognise the equal partnership in designing and delivering a programme,
- Build on individuals' strengths and,
- Enable an open two-way interaction to help mould and develop the programme deliverables.
- Draw on personal experience of mental health problems
- Consider the needs and views of their local communities

Mind and MEL Research were involved in two workshops prior to the programme rolling out. Mind Cymru, all four Project Workers and the evaluation team attended. The first workshop was held in December 2018 and the following was covered:

- Overview of the aims and objectives to the programme
- A brief overview of what was required from the evaluation
- What was understood by peer support and the Hub model
- Designing the Hub resource
- Targets to be set
- Roles and responsibilities of Hubs
- Next steps

The second workshop was held in January 2019 and its aims were follow on from the design process resulting from the first workshop, whilst also exploring:

- Draft evaluation approaches and showcasing examples of data collection
- The grant process and how this will work
- National Mind resource availability
- Draft peer support programme initiation pan

A learning workshop was also delivered mid-point (July 2019) in the programme, this was useful for all stakeholders to gather information on programme delivery, operation challenges and how elements need or should be adapted for the remainder of the programme.

- To review Side by Side Cymru's progress in delivering training, networking and one-to-one support to peer leaders and community-based organisations across Wales.
- To share learning between local Minds in Wales and England.

2. Promotion and engagement

Throughout the quarterly reporting process, Hubs reported that the promotion of the programme was going well and that the activities were well received by the community. Throughout the programme 571 social media posts were sent out, 33 newsletter / bulletins were circulated, and 18 blogs / case studies were developed. Alongside these activities, Hubs delivered other bespoke promotion tactics such as:

- Attend volunteer fairs – not booking a stall but just walking along other stalls and collecting email addresses/connections

- Being a guest speaker at other events

- Attending conventions and forums

- Utilising other roles/hats in project worker's lives

- Benefits that came from project worker being local/known in the area already and well connected

- Newsletter that local Mind has on peer support could be co-opted as a collaboration that network members contribute to

There was also a degree of cascade learning, with Peer Leaders passing learning on to others as well as spreading the word of the network. The learning event delivered in October 2019, showed how effective this type of event could be for people to share experiences, signpost services between groups and be informed about future training opportunities. Anecdotally, programme beneficiaries also mentioned that this type of event could be introduced to other local Mind projects and to assist in making connections with other services being delivered across Wales.

The Side by Side Programme wanted to engage with specific harder to reach groups such as, men, those living in rural areas, welsh speakers and BME communities / groups. Overleaf showcases how one hub approached this process.

3. Bespoke approaches taken by Hubs

Each Hub approached the programme delivery slightly differently and were given the flexibility to do so in order to respond to their local area's needs, such as the rurality and distance between groups. The programme was designed with a focus on group engagement, not on a one to one basis, hence the lack targets assigned to this aspect. Some Hubs delivered more one to one support either because the beneficiary needed a more personal approach or where, groups were unable to attend larger events etc. This flexibility is considered one of the key enablers to successful delivery of the programme. The also could have negatively impact on the resources, due to the programmes design. Engaging on a one to one basis will inevitably take up more time, but the programme showed that this type of engagement was needed.

The Side by Side Cymru programme **engaged** with the **settled migrant community**. One of the Hubs provided feedback on this process.

" *Side by Side was an opportunity to engage with this community, to provide additional resources and to promote services to people it would not normally have contact with.* "

Through the **Side by Side Cymru programme**, the Hub provided **one to one support**, **advice** and **guidance**, translated programme documents and provided **grants** to two migrant community groups.

Pathways to engagement

Having well established migrant community workers already connected to groups helps to bridge the gap and offered a smoother pathway to engagement.

"There needs to be joint promotion through both the migrant community and through community workers."

Resources to engage

You need to commit to the amount of time it requires to engage and gain the trust of communities. Early on the Hub committed to assigning 2 grants to migrant community groups.

"It took several months to engage the community in Side by Side Cymru programme."

Peer support core values

For migrant communities having that "experience in common" is very important. The groups engaged with had a commonality with regards to their gender, ethnicity and migration status.

"Refugees should not be referred to as such once they have settled. They are members of the local community."

Impact of the programme

Two groups received funding, totaling £500. The funding was used for hall hire and part funded an event that was delivered by the local community.

"One of the groups said they would like a mental health awareness session from their local Mind."

Future engagement

- Make sure you understand the community you are engaging with.
- Use personalised terminology e.g. don't label everyone as an Arabic speaker.
- It will take time so make sure you commit to this.

"Keep trying, try different approaches, be patient."

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What were the challenges

The resource assigned to the programme was a key challenge that was fed back by all four Hubs. How this impacted on delivery is discussed in more detail in some of the points below.

1. **Geography**

Although not unique to Wales, the rural nature and transport/road layout of some areas impacted on the amount of time allocated, attendance at events and the need for more one to one / bespoke support *There is no 'one' local area - I'm working in long and thin counties."*

2. **Quality vs. quantity of support delivered**

It takes time to develop relationships with new groups and support those already part of the network. Due to the short-term nature (delivered for one year) of the programme it was difficult for Hubs to balance between engaging new Peer Leaders and groups and coaching the existing ones. *"Having time for new leads." "There is pressure to respond and manage groups expectations with the level of support. Due to the part time nature of the post I can't respond as quickly as people want."*

"As always, there is never enough time to do everything we want to do!"

On the other hand, most of the targets set for programme were achieved and each Hub performed well in its delivery. One of the roles of the Hubs were to foster relationships between groups, but there was also a need for them to take a back seat so that a dependence on the Hubs didn't develop, which could enable the network to remain self-reliant beyond the lifetime of the programme. There is a question remaining as to whether the support offered was sufficient for groups or whether Hubs were conflicted in what to prioritise within the resources available.

3. **Mobilisation period**

Hub project workers fed back that the mobilisation period felt rushed and that it made delivery difficult. Although the programme achieved the required targets (as noted in the above point), project workers found this period challenging.

4. **The grant process**

Hub project workers found that they needed to be really clear about rules for grant allocation and additional support to groups to complete the forms. The project workers needed additional time to engage with groups and to help complete forms etc. For future programmes we would recommend that the Hubs have more staff resource available to help project workers foster relationships with

groups and allow for more time travelling / doing one-to-one sessions with more rural community groups. Explore the option of merging back office admin across the Hubs. For example, one person could be organising logistics of events, handling grant funds – it would be easier to standardise across Hubs with just one person focusing on it.

5. **How Hubs used the toolkit**

Early in the evaluation we found that some of the Hubs weren't explicitly telling beneficiaries, that what was covered in the training, came from the Peer Support Toolkit. In addition to this, hard copies of the toolkit were not provided, this made it difficult to make that connection during the evaluation. Beneficiaries also found that there was a lot of information provided during the events so having something to go back (i.e. a hard copy of the toolkit) to would be beneficial *"…they need to have had a copy to digest – currently by the time the training is over they forget the toolkit."* Mid-point in delivery, additional funding was secured to provide printed copies of the toolkit to all beneficiaries. *"Once we had the toolkit in a hardcopy to provide to people it worked really well. I have heard people refer to it as the bible."*

6. **Growing the network**

The size of the grant did not appeal to all community-based organisations, especially larger charities. The Hubs were more successful with smaller local groups. *"I don't think the money is enough, it doesn't*

motivate people for the amount of work they need to do for it. Time is an issue for these people." Threshold for grants could be more flexible to attract attention of bigger organisation e.g. to make it worth their while. The age range of the group / Peer Leader seemed to dictated availability to attend events e.g. retired available in day, working age available in evening

Some smaller and more traditional grass roots groups were harder to engage with and less willing to get involved*. "There are still a lot of closed groups that are not open to the wider community. They do not advertise or promote their services very well or at all. You only really get to hear about them if you speak directly to a member of the group. It is challenging to engage with these groups as they don't really want to be involved."*

The Hubs reported back that statutory services see the value of peer support but at a higher level they just do not have the resources and money to deal with it. More work needs to be done to showcase the return on investment or social values that peer support could generate. *"Statutory services need to be more involved but I have found that they just don't have the time – they see the benefit but don't have the resources." "Local councillors are keener to share what we were doing with their community, although this didn't always happen as they didn't have the time."* Hubs felt they needed more time to build these relationships and eventually get them on board *"It's a very slow burn with everything through this project…"*

"Awareness is quite strong but how that translates to statutory services any differently, couldn't tell you. We've had a community connector who turned up and hoovered up all the contact details of different groups, to start putting them on social prescribing model."

"It's my understanding that commissioners tend to be quite high up in an organisation, they only deal with what they need to deal with – it's a capacity issue."

7. Terminology used

During the design stage we anticipated the need to clarify what peer support is and how it is different from other types of support. Some groups did not define themselves as providing 'peer support', specifically those more strongly aligned to the stigma attached to mental health. *"Some of these groups don't want to be seen as dealing with an organisation associated with Mental Health – there is still a lot of stigma which is sad – One group told me to never contact them again, as they didn't see themselves as dealing with mental health issues."* Others found the terminology used too official, such as commissioner speak – frameworks, interventions, quality standards – not in the spirit of peer support *"Only the professional charities would call it peer support, none of the actual group call it peer*

Evaluation approach

Feedback on evaluation materials from hubs

Embedding an evaluation into programme delivery can be challenging. The collaborative working with the Hubs and mid-point learning workshop helped to open up communications as to what was working well and what was not, and how the evaluation data collection approach could be changed to best suit the programme delivery.

- **Collecting data from Peer Leaders**

We were aware from the onset that gathering feedback for the project would be challenging due the stigma that exists around mental health, budgetary limitations assigned to the evaluation and the level of potential disconnect between Hub Project Workers and peer support recipients. Through trialling the initial data collection approach defined in the evaluation plan, we made some changes to the way the data was collected.

Initially we collected baseline feedback from Peer Leaders and community-based organisations via an online survey sent to their email address (which were provided by the Hub Project Workers). We received a low response rate via the online survey form .This could have been due to them not having the time, overlooking the email, or it being an early stage in the programme where they had not yet developed enough of a relationship with the programme or evaluators. We found that we were getting better return rates for the paper event feedback forms that were being completed on the day of the event they attended (this could have been due to having a captured audience).

Built on this successful experience, we continued with collecting the baseline data from Peer Leaders and community-based organisations who signed up to the network at the first event they attend, as part of the paper event feedback form.

It should be noted that this resulted in the survey form being longer in length and therefore project workers had to section time in the events so that beneficiaries could complete it.

- **Collecting data from peer support recipients**

The peer support recipients online survey resulted in only a handful of completed survey returns. Initially we assumed this may be due to the programme being in its infancy or the survey was not

being well received by recipients. Following this low uptake, we asked the Hubs to try and promote the survey form to groups where they have built up a good relationship. The researchers also promoted the survey whilst carrying out the in-depth interviews with Peer Leaders. Unfortunately, this approach still did not yield sufficient data required. We obtained permission to attend peer support groups to gather qualitative data through Chattabouts, but due to Covid-19 we were only able to attend two of the groups. For future engagement activities with recipients we suggest using a more placed-based data collection approach from the beginning

Limitations to the evaluation

- Inferring causality in real-life programme evaluations can be challenging due to external factors beyond the evaluation's control.

- While we have undertaken research activities, the impact of the programme was measured only through self-reported behaviours. There were no independent validating observations so the evidence is intrinsically limited.

- The programme did not include a control group (gathering data from people that did not participate) in order to provide counterfactual evidence with which to assess outcomes. This limits programmes which are trying to include behaviour change as part of their project.

Summary

Key learnings

The Side by Side Cymru programme showed that a Peer Support hub model is effective in providing support to community-based organisations and Peer Leaders. The evaluation also found evidence that there is a real need to have ongoing programmes like Side by Side Cymru across Wales.

The degree of impact the programme had on Peer Leaders and community-based organisations was dependent on their length of involvement with peer support delivery prior to their participation. Peer Leaders confidence in delivering peer support, their understanding of peer support and the value that it provides increased as a result of the programme. The grants awarded through the programme helped sustain peer support activity by allowing groups to pay for venue hire, one-off events and materials. There was an improved understanding of peer support provision and the programme's activities with Statutory service providers and commissioners.

Recommendations

The evaluation identified a set of key recommendations for the delivery of future similar programmes:

Programme design

- Co-production in mental health is an ongoing relationship between those who have used and those who are involved in providing mental health services and work together in the design, delivery and outcomes of programmes. Future programmes should therefore commit to co-production to ensure that people with lived experience of mental health problems shape and lead the programme from the beginning. Sufficient time for co-production should be built in during the design and implementation phase.

- The provision of more staff time to establish and engage with a range of stakeholders before the programme starts. This will allow more space to work collaboratively and allow an even greater degree of flexibility to programme delivery.

- Following on from the above point, although targets were achieved, more time needs to be allocated to embed the programme, for example the lead-in time for the grant applications to get going was underestimated. Enquiries and award of grants did not pick up until the third quarter of the programme.

- A lack of administration support was one of the main challenges faced by Project workers across all four Hubs. Administration support was something that the Hubs thought would be beneficial so that they could concentrate on supporting groups and Peer Leaders.

✓ The formation of micro networks within communities could help support and foster localised network growth, specifically in the more rural and traditional settings.

✓ An area of recommendation would be to establish a regional Side by Side Cymru Steering Group to help bolster support and involvement in peer support delivery models, with the aim for this to be continued beyond the lifetime of the programme. The Steering Group should comprise of commissioners and other statutory service providers, alongside Peer Leader and community-based organisations and those with lived experiences of mental health issues to improve and foster shared learning. The skills, time and resource these relationships take to build will also need to be considered.

Programme delivery

✓ Beneficiaries felt the networking and training events were very useful and delivered well, but commonly mentioned was a need to include more detailed elements, potentially training sessions focusing on specific subjects, e.g. how to set up a group, how to deal with challenging behaviour. Beneficiaries felt that any future programmes should consider delivering a number of shorter sessions focusing on these specific topics. Beneficiaries would then find it easier to take this home and digest the information, as well as potentially putting this into practice.

✓ Future programmes should recognise that newly formed peer support groups and older more established ones may need different levels of advice and support, and a bespoke approach to networking, training may be required. This could include making the Peer Support Toolkit available to download and print in 'bite size' chunks or as individual chapters.

✓ The programme was successful in setting up a network of Peer Leaders and groups. It is evident that beneficiaries valued the programme and that there was a need for such a network. The continuation of the programme would therefore be beneficial and could be built upon the work already done during this programme.

✓ For future programmes we would recommend that from the onset, funds should be made available to print hardcopies of the Toolkit and/or other materials for every Peer Leader and community-based organisations signed up to the network.

Evaluation approach

✓ As previously mentioned, utilising co-production approaches would allow research teams to engage with not only service users (those who receive peer support), but also those who deliver services during the programme design to establish best practice when collecting evaluation data. This would also allow for approaches to be piloted and assess suitability.

✓ In order to effectively capture impact on recipients of peer support, a more place-based data collection approach with peer support recipients (such as gaining consent for research to attend a selection of groups to follow journeys) may be more successful. For

future programmes, we would recommend more budget is made available for researchers to engage with this cohort. For example, if peer support recipients are attending any events, we could have a researcher at the event carrying out short face to face surveys.

✓ Utilising a World Café method is a simple and effective way of gathering insightful data from service users and should be considered for future evaluations. Another approach would be to host an online discussion page that is open for a period of time where questions and topics can be discussed. This approach is useful for when a programme covers a large area. Both approaches would need to utilise incentives to encourage people to take part.

✓ Hubs reported that there was some concern with the time commitment to complete the journey diaries. Providing an incentive for collating information via journey diaries from peer support recipients may help to encourage participation.

✓ There was little uptake in the online survey for peer support recipients, again a financial incentive such as a prize draw could be beneficial. Budget would need to be assigned to the evaluation to facilitate this[2].

✓ Utilise social media channels, newsletter and e-bulletins to create more awareness of the evaluation with beneficiaries.

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[2] *The previous Side by Side evaluation offered a prize draw incentive.*